

“It was easy to look for a place, but hard to actually get one”:

University students’ experiences of racial discrimination in off-campus housing

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Abstract

This study examines university student perceptions of and experiences with racial discrimination in off-campus housing in Ontario's Niagara Region. Using a qualitative methodology informed by critical race theory, the study draws upon semi-structured, qualitative interviews conducted with 14 Brock University students to gain insight into racial discrimination in the context of the search for and life in off-campus housing. Participants discussed the wider context of off-campus housing in the region, including certain difficulties related to student inexperience in the off-campus housing market, age, and gender. Along with uncovering these other challenges faced by students, the thesis documents and analyses accounts of the impact of racialized identities and racism at different stages of the student off-campus housing search and subsequent residency. By documenting and analyzing these perceptions and experiences, this study seeks to contribute to wider efforts to expose and challenge racial discrimination.

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Introduction

The life of a university student is multifaceted, involving both academic and other pursuits. For many students, a necessary prerequisite for the pursuit of both academic and other university activities is the ability to secure housing (by which I mean a wide range of accommodations, including apartments, shared homes, etc.). For many students, the task of securing housing is one that they encounter for the first time during their university careers. Housing is a basic human right for all and, for university students, having access to safe and affordable housing is essential for their wellbeing and success throughout the university experience. Although some students live at home or in on-campus housing during their studies, many students seek off-campus housing at some point in their university careers, and this task is simpler for some students than others. The ways in which this critical aspect of student life may be shaped by racism, and other forms of discrimination, such as classism, sexism, ableism, homophobia or transphobia, etc., is important to consider.

While Canada's multicultural policy and dominant discourses of colour-blind postracialism perpetuate the notion that racism no longer exists in this country (Henry & Tator, 2010; Teelucksingh, 2006), issues of racialization and racism in the university setting, and in the classroom in particular, have been well documented by various researchers (for example, Gilmour, Bhandar, Heer, & Ma, 2012; Henry & Tator, 2009). A range of issues have been investigated, including the pervasiveness of whiteness in university curricula, the marginalization of faculty of colour in academia, and the limits of anti-racist policies. However, while much of the existing research focuses on university-based issues of classroom dynamics and curriculum issues, there are many important aspects of students' lives outside of the university proper that

have the potential to impact their academic performance. In this thesis, I examine the ways in which racialization and racism shape other aspects of students' lives, specifically their housing experiences.

I became interested in the topic of racial discrimination in off-campus housing for a number of reasons. While I feel that I have always been passionate about various social justice issues, my academic interest began in my first year of undergraduate studies in Sociology where I was first exposed to concepts like white privilege, causing me to examine my own complicity in social inequality in greater depth. Several class discussions throughout my bachelor's degree, and a research project in my final year of undergraduate studies focused on racial segregation in social housing, sparked my interest in both housing issues in general and racialization and racial discrimination in housing more particularly. Reflecting on both my personal observations in my home province of Manitoba, and my own experience of searching for off-campus housing in the Niagara Region, also led me to the more specific topic of racial discrimination in off-campus housing.

In the spirit of reflexivity, I offer an account of how my research interests prompted a re-examination of my own experience of looking for off-campus housing after I was accepted at Brock University for my Master's degree in April of 2014. Being located in Manitoba and having never been to St. Catharines, Ontario where Brock University is located, I was unsure of how difficult the process would be. After consulting the Brock Off-Campus Living website, I found an apartment that met my budget constraints and desire for proximity to the university, and contacted the landlords. A tentative agreement quickly fell through, however, when I was not able to come and see the apartment, as I was still living in Manitoba at the time. This led to another internet search for an apartment, both on the Off-Campus Living website and on other

advertising websites separate from the university where, after a bit of searching, I found another possible apartment. After an initial conversation, the landlord agreed to hold a room for me pending my provision of references. We also agreed in the interim to have a Skype (video chat) conversation, which permitted me to ask further questions, while also allowing the landlord to see who I was. Following the Skype conversation, however, I remained wary, as I had only seen pictures of the apartment, and so I arranged to fly to Ontario in order to have a tour of the apartment, at which time I signed the lease.

Looking back on this experience, certain aspects of the story stand out to me. In particular, it is possible to reflect more deeply on how several factors contributed to the relative ease with which I was able to find housing. For example, my class location allowed me the freedom to travel and look at an apartment in a different province. In addition, access to critical technologies, such as a computer and a Skype account, can also be seen as significant. I have also reflected on the fact that the video call allowed my landlord to physically see me, as opposed to simply hearing my voice over the phone, and to confirm certain characteristics about me, such as my gendered and racialized identities. While this was not something I considered at the time, possibly because of my privileged position of whiteness, it is hard not to wonder if this was part of the purpose of that call, and about the contribution of all of these factors to my success in accessing suitable off-campus housing.

In this thesis, I go beyond my personal experiences of searching for off-campus housing to embark on a more scholarly examination of university student perceptions of and experiences with racial discrimination in off-campus housing in the Niagara Region. I do so through an analysis of joint and individual semi-structured, qualitative interviews with 14 Brock University students. The findings of my study – that participants felt that their racialized identities had an

impact on their housing searches and that many of them had experienced racial discrimination in off-campus housing – support the emergent discussion of racism at Brock University and have implications for the Canadian university sector more generally. The findings point to the need to augment anti-racist scholarship and activism that focuses on on-campus racism with scholarship and anti-racist activism that addresses off-campus realities, in this case, specifically, racial discrimination in the off-campus student housing sector. It is hoped that by documenting and analyzing this phenomenon, this thesis can contribute to bringing greater awareness to an issue that is largely unacknowledged by the majority white population, and point to the need for greater efforts to challenge such forms of discrimination. By contributing to growing scholarly documentation of the many ways in which racism – both on and off campus – shapes student experiences of higher education in Canada, this thesis makes an important contribution to discussions of racism, both in the context of Brock University, and in the context of Canadian university student experiences more generally.

The thesis is organized as follows. Chapter one consists of an outlining of critical race theory and how it frames the thesis, as well as a review of relevant bodies of literature relating to racial discrimination in off-campus student housing. These literatures include racism in the university, racial discrimination in housing in general, and finally, literature surrounding both student housing in general and racial discrimination in student housing.

Chapter two provides an overview of the methodological framework used in this study. This includes a description of my positionality with regard to my racialized and gendered identities, as well as my graduate student identity. The qualitative methodology and methods used in this study are discussed, along with the details of the recruitment methods used, the interview process, and ethical considerations.

Chapter three begins to examine how participants talked about off-campus housing, including housing options, issues of inexperience in housing markets, the significance of age and gender, and the particular positioning of international students.

Chapter four takes up participants' perceptions of racial discrimination in off-campus housing, including viewing the Niagara Region and Brock University as exclusionary white spaces, the role of racialized identities in the housing search, and a discussion of the differences between individual landlords and landlords working for private housing companies.

Chapter five documents participants' experiences of racial discrimination throughout the housing search, including looking at listings, initial interactions with landlords, and viewing and/or finalizing accommodations. Experiences of racial discrimination while living in off-campus housing are also discussed. A brief conclusion sums up the findings and addresses their significance for further scholarly as well as more grounded anti-racist work.

Chapter 1

Theoretical Framework & Literature Review

This thesis is informed by various theories and bodies of literature that have influenced the formulation of the research questions, research design, and analysis of research findings. Because of the limited scholarship that directly addresses the issue of racial discrimination in off-campus housing, I have had to look for related literatures that can illuminate this topic. In this chapter, I outline some of the key theoretical approaches and concepts that are used to inform this research, as well as some of the insights that I have drawn from critical race theory and related scholarship that addresses issues of racism in university spaces more specifically. I also review some of the literature on racial discrimination and housing, as well as a more limited but useful body of work related to student housing.

Critical Race Theory

I have employed critical race theory (CRT) to broadly inform my research. According to Hylton (2012), “CRT’s major premise is that society is fundamentally racially stratified and unequal, where power processes systematically disenfranchise racially oppressed people” (p. 24). The goal of critical race theory is to address the ways in which systemic racism persists in spite of laws, policies, and broader social understandings that may suggest the contrary. In relation to the issue of obtaining off-campus housing that is the focus of this thesis, this would include the existence of policies that would appear to protect tenants from various forms of discrimination, including racial discrimination.

Critical race theory is marked by several central ideas and concepts related to issues of racial discrimination, including the social construction of race, and the concepts of white privilege and intersectionality, each of which are outlined briefly below.

That race is not an inherent, biological fact, but rather is socially constructed, means that, as Delgado and Stefancic (2012), explain, “race and races are products of social thought and relations. Not objective, inherent, or fixed, they correspond with no biological or genetic reality; rather, races are categories society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient” (p. 8). The concept of racialization as developed by Omi and Winant (1994) builds on this insight by highlighting how “racial” attributions, being socially constructed, change over time and across space, and can be applied to groupings marked by more “ethnic” markers of religion, language, or cultural practice through “the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group” (p. 14). Racialized identities, as this suggests, are both socially constructed and a “manifestation of unequal power between groups” (Baum, 2006, p. 11). In the context of unequal power relations, racialized identities can be imposed by the more powerful upon those with less power, who may in turn resist such impositions. Racialized identities are therefore often sites of contestation. With this in mind, I asked study participants to provide their own self-identifications of their racialized identities, and then used these provided identifiers in my analysis.

The concept of white privilege refers to the many social and material benefits enjoyed by individuals and groups socially constructed as white within unequal racial systems (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). This is an important concept, as it recognizes that the oppression of racialized minority groups has multiple benefits for white people as a group, regardless of other social indicators, such as class or gender, and highlights the ways in which those who benefit from their

whiteness in such systems are implicated, and often invested in, racism and racist oppression. The societal privileging of whiteness, and the contrasting everyday racism faced by racialized minorities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), leads to different and unequal experiences of the world for those who are constructed as white versus those who are constructed as members of racialized minorities. Critical race theorists highlight the privileging of whiteness, and work to challenge this privilege for the purpose of creating a more equitable world.

A third concept central to critical race theory is that of intersectionality. Intersectionality refers to the ways in which racialized inequality interacts with other forms of inequality, for example, those of class or gender. Although racism is the primary focus of critical race theory, there is recognition that racism intersects in significant ways with other positionings to shape the lives of individuals and groups in racially unequal societies.

Another key aspect of critical race theory is its commitment to social justice. CRT aims, among other things, to empower racialized minority groups in order to combat racism and the intersecting oppressions of classism, sexism, and other inequalities. An important means of doing this is through highlighting the usually marginalized knowledges and perspectives of racialized minorities (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002), for example, by using storytelling as a means to bring such knowledges and perspectives to the fore (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012). Solorzano and Yosso (2002) refer to the importance of providing a platform for the “counter-stories” of those whose voices are often marginalized or silenced as part of a larger project of “exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege” (p. 32). Through such counter-stories, the master narratives and dominant ideologies of white privilege can be exposed and challenged.

A leading critical race scholar in Canada, Sherene Razack, has developed its application to the Canadian context with a focus on race and space. Razack (2002) provides a Canadian perspective on race and space that highlights the significance of settler colonization. As she states:

A white settler society is one established by Europeans on non-European soil. Its origins lie in the dispossession and near extermination of Indigenous populations by the conquering Europeans. As it evolves, a white settler society continues to be structured by a racial hierarchy. (Razack, 2002, p. 1)

In white settler societies such as Canada, Razack argues, ongoing racial hierarchies are supported by “national mythologies” which she defines as culturally dominant stories about a particular nation (2002, p. 1). In the Canadian case, the myths that white European settlers were entitled to whatever land they stumbled upon, and that Canada was uninhabited when they arrived, legitimate white settler colonialism and white privilege. These national mythologies, which are both racial and spatial, serve to justify past and present Indigenous displacement, as well as white settler and ongoing immigrant settlement (Razack, 2002, pp. 3-4).

Other Canadian scholars inspired by critical race theory have built on Razack’s insights on the relationship between race and space. For instance, Teelucksingh (2006), explaining that “spatial analysis is important in terms of how groups relate to each other, as social relations of dominance and otherness are projected into space” (p. 9), adds that it is important to analyse how social space “operates as part of the everyday experience and becomes a way to normalize new and latent forms of racism” (p. 9). In addition, O’Connell (2010) and Peake and Ray (2001) have also discussed how whiteness is privileged in many Canadian spaces in ways that

perpetuate everyday racism. This work is important for my thinking about the everyday experiences of racial discrimination in the off-campus housing spaces of the Niagara Region.

These key conceptual insights from critical race theory, and Canadian critical race scholars more particularly, shape my broad approach to the topic of racial discrimination in off-campus housing. My research has also been shaped by other bodies of literature located in the course of my searches for related research. Below I offer a brief review of some of these areas of scholarship, notably work on racism in university spaces, racial discrimination and housing, and student housing.

Racism in the University

University spaces have been a site of considerable research, including research on racism. Along with a large international literature on racism in universities, racism in Canadian universities has been well documented. Several edited works (for example, Gilmour et al., 2012, Henry & Tator, 2009) address such topics as anti-racist policies in the academy and the pervasiveness of white perspectives in university curricula. Interesting work by Perry (2012) has analyzed how the graduation photos of the apparently uniformly white graduates of the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century at the University of Manitoba hide histories of systemic discrimination against Indigenous people, restrictive quota systems for other racial and ethnic groups, and Canada's racially exclusionary immigration policies. Some work addresses faculty experiences of racism and racialization in Canadian universities (for example, Douglas & Halas, 2013; Henry, 2015; Samuel & Wane, 2005; Tilley & Taylor, 2013), while other scholars have focused primarily on student perspectives and experiences. As student experience-based studies are the closest to the focus of this thesis, I outline some of this work in more detail below.

The experiences of Indigenous students in Canadian university settings are beginning to be documented. For example, Silver, Michell, and Harris (2013) described the experiences of 15 Indigenous staff of the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba who began taking courses at the University of Winnipeg, and some of the difficulties they faced in that setting, including barriers within the admissions process. In addition, Clark et al. (2014) described the ways in which Aboriginal students at one Canadian university experienced various racial microaggressions from their non-Aboriginal peers and professors. As the authors explain, racial microaggressions are “brief and commonplace verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities with detrimental cumulative psychological effects on people of color” (Clark et al., 2014, p. 113). Clark et al. found that their Aboriginal participants felt that non-Aboriginals in the university setting expected them and their culture to be primitive, and that Aboriginal issues were overlooked in the university curriculum. These participants also felt that non-Aboriginal students thought Aboriginal students had an unfair advantage because of their alleged funding.

Echoing this finding, Currie, Wild, Schopflocher, Laing, and Veugelers (2012), in a study of Aboriginal experiences at another Canadian university, also found that Aboriginal students felt that non-Aboriginal students, staff, and faculty challenged their academic legitimacy in the university setting. The findings of Bailey (2015), who interviewed eleven Indigenous and six non-Indigenous students at McMaster University with the purpose of investigating “how Indigenous students perceive and experience racism within the university environment” (p. 4), were in line with these studies. Bailey’s research also indicated low interaction levels between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, and that some Indigenous students felt academically and socially isolated and experienced little support from the university (as, for example, their concerns as Indigenous students were minimized or dismissed). In addition, the majority of

students interviewed by Bailey had experienced or observed racist behaviour in the classroom, either from peers or instructors.

The experiences of Asian Canadian students in the context of Canadian universities have also received some attention. Coloma (2013), for example, wrote an article critically analyzing a 2010 Macleans article that included allegations that some Canadian universities, by becoming “too Asian”, were supposedly making it difficult for white students to successfully compete. The analysis noted how Asian Canadian students, while actively recruited by universities in order to maintain enrolment and benefit from tuition and fees, were thereby perceived by a dominant white Canadian public as taking educational opportunities away from allegedly more deserving, “true” (read: white) Canadians. This paradox, according to Coloma, makes Asian Canadians an “un/wanted” racial category in educational institutions. Coloma suggests that, in response, Asian Canadian students enact a form of “ethno-nationalism” which involves “the assertion and privileging of their Canadian-ness, while simultaneously distancing themselves from and rejecting their Asian-ness” (2013, p. 581).

Houshmand, Spanierman, and Tafarodi (2014) studied the everyday experiences of Asian international students at a Canadian university, focusing on the racial microaggressions they encountered. The authors found that their participants reported feeling excluded and avoided on campus, ridiculed for their accents, and rendered invisible by their white Canadian peers. In addition, Houshmand et al. found that Asian international students felt that they were expected to fulfill stereotypes of intelligence attributed to them based on racialized “Asianness.” These studies provide some insight into the experiences of Aboriginal, Asian Canadian, and international university students in Canada with regard to racial discrimination.

Although not specific to their experiences in the university setting, literature relevant to the phenomenon of white privilege can be found in some American research that explores the racial attitudes of white university students more generally. Cabrera (2014), in one such study of white, male U.S. university students, found that they tended to view racism as an individual, rather than systemic problem, and that they also often minimized issues of race, attributing racial inequality to other factors such as educational inequality and subscribing to notions of “reverse racism,” therefore viewing white people as victims of marginalization. Smith, Senter, and Strachan (2013), who also researched white U.S. university students’ racial attitudes but unlike Cabrera included both male and female respondents, found a “... small, but statistically significant difference ... in the racial attitudes of white men and white women” (p. 577). They found that white females were more supportive of racial equality and less likely to express “racial resentment” (Smith et al., 2013, p. 578), a finding that points to the need for intersectional analyses of white racism. Neville, Lewis, Poteat, and Spanierman (2014) also noted gender differences when it came to “color-blind racial attitudes” that “deny, minimize, and distort the existence of racism in its many forms (e.g., individual, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional)” (p. 180). These authors found that, while “color-blindness” decreased for all of the white U.S. student participants throughout the course of their degrees, this decline was faster for white females than white males. The authors also noted that white student involvement in diversity activities, such as university sponsored lectures or events, or courses that addressed issues of race, also led to decreased rates of color-blind racial attitudes.

As discussed above, there is a considerable amount of scholarship on racism in university spaces, but little that extends beyond the campus setting to include other important spaces in students’ lives, including the off-campus housing spaces that are the focus of this thesis. Due the

lack of significant research on racial discrimination specifically in off-campus student housing, in the following section I turn to some of the broader work on racial discrimination in housing that can inform my study of student housing. I then consider the limited work on student housing in particular which, although it rarely addresses racial discrimination, still offers important insights that inform my study.

Racial Discrimination and Housing

A great deal of the work that has been done on racial discrimination in housing has been conducted in the American context. Below I offer some indication of the range of this U.S.-based work. Some of the scholarship, for example, focuses on racial and ethnic differences in homeownership, noting that white individuals are more likely to have access to homeownership in the United States than members of racialized minority groups (e.g., Desilva & Elmelech, 2012; Kuebler, 2013; Williams, 2015). Attention has also been paid to the racial segregation of American neighbourhoods and communities (e.g., Charles, 2003; Massey, 2016; Voborníková, 2014). In addition, there is some work on racism in the context of housing searches. A large-scale national audit study conducted in 1989, the Housing Discrimination Study, used pairs of one white individual and either an African American or Hispanic individual to test racial discrimination during searches for accommodation (Yinger, 1995). The findings revealed widespread racial housing discrimination in the United States. Black and Hispanic individuals, for example, were told about fewer housing units than white individuals and information about housing units was more often withheld from them, while white individuals were more likely to receive follow-up calls and positive comments about potential accommodations from landlords and housing agents (Yinger, 1995, p. 49). In addition, further analysis of the findings of this

study revealed that landlords not only displayed personally discriminatory actions, but invoked “economic incentives that flow from the prejudice of their white customers” as a further reason to discriminate (Ondrich, Stricker, & Yinger, 1999, p. 203).

Work has also been done on housing discrimination based on speech patterns in the United States. For example, Massey and Lundy (2001) conducted a telephone audit study using male and female testers who spoke in Black English Vernacular (BEV), Black Accented English (BAE), and White Middle-Class English (WME) (p. 456), in which testers speaking in these three linguistic styles spoke with landlords on the phone about potential accommodations using predetermined, similar scripts, and recorded the landlords’ responses. The authors found that, judging by the responses from landlords, Black testers experienced more limited access to rental housing units than white testers, lower class Black individuals (those speaking in Black English Vernacular) had more limited access to rental housing than middle class Black individuals (those speaking Black Accented English), and that females experienced more limited access to rental housing than males. They also found that race, class, and gender intersected to privilege some and disadvantage others, as lower class, Black females had the least access to rental housing.

In addition to other studies with similar results (e.g. Ewens, Tomlin, & Wang, 2014; Hanson & Hawley, 2011), Feldman and Weseley (2013), in an email-based study in the United States, found that males with African American sounding names were less likely to receive positive responses from landlords than males with Asian American, White, and Hispanic sounding names. The same study also found that females with African American and Hispanic sounding names were less likely to receive positive responses than females with Asian American and White sounding names. Within these findings, however, Feldman and Weseley found that, in general, female potential tenants were more likely to receive positive responses than male

potential tenants. Commenting on this outcome, the authors suggest that, “this difference may be a result of people stereotyping men and women in such a way as to make men seem less desirable as tenants,” for example, viewing men as aggressive and more likely to engage in risky activities, while viewing women as neat, gentle, and passive (Feldman & Weseley, 2013, p. E422). Several Norwegian and Swedish studies have also found that potential female tenants received more positive responses from landlords than their male equivalents (Ahmed and Hammarstedt, 2008; Andersson et al., 2012; Bengtsson et al., 2012), although Carlsson & Eriksson (2014) could not replicate the Swedish findings in a similar study. These findings once again point to the importance of bringing the insights of intersectionality to analyses that can address both racialized and gendered experiences of housing discrimination.

The importance of attending to gendered experiences is further highlighted in a U.S. study of sexual harassment in housing. In this study, Tester (2008) retrieved cases of sexual harassment in housing from the Ohio Civil Rights Commission. The analysis of these cases revealed that women filed 98% of the cases studied and, of these cases, 58% were filed by African American women, 10% by “other” women of colour, and 32% were filed by white women. Regardless of who filed the report, the majority of perpetrators of sexual harassment were white male landlords or property managers (Tester, 2008, p. 355). Discussing the ways in which these men perpetrated sexual harassment, the author states that, “Landlords also used gender, race, and class to harass their tenants. Specifically, landlords used stereotypes about women, which were sometimes racialized, and the fact that the women were poor and often desperate for housing to manipulate tenants and gain access to them sexually” (Tester, 2008, p. 359). As the author makes clear, it is important to conduct an intersectional analysis when studying housing issues.

Roscigno, Karafin, and Tester (2009), in a more recent study of racial housing discrimination in the United States, identified two forms of racial discrimination in this setting: first, what they call “exclusionary discrimination,” which involves discriminatory “actions and practices that exclude an individual or family from obtaining the housing of their choosing” (p. 52), and second, what they call “nonexclusionary discrimination,” which involves “forms of discrimination (e.g., racial harassment, differential treatment, and discriminatory terms and conditions on current leases, insurance arrangements, and mortgages terms and refinancing) within already established and existing housing arrangements.” (p. 49). The experiences of the participants in this study can be thought about in terms of these two categories, as many participants discussed experiencing racial discrimination within the course of their housing searches in the Niagara Region (exclusionary discrimination), and also once established in rental housing in the region (nonexclusionary discrimination).

In addition to this research from the United States, there is also a significant international literature on racial discrimination in housing. In Sweden and Norway, for example, some studies have involved sending email inquiries about accommodations to potential landlords using names that suggested specific racialized or ethnic identities. The findings of these studies revealed discrimination against both males and females with Arabic sounding names (Ahmed & Hammarstedt, 2008; Andersson, Jakobsson, & Kotsadam, 2012; Bengtsson, Iverman, & Hinnerich, 2012; Carlsson & Eriksson, 2014). Carlsson & Eriksson’s (2015) similar study in London, England found evidence of discrimination against those with African or Indian sounding names.

In Australia, an audit study was recently conducted by MacDonald et al. (2016), in which pairs of testers, consisting of an Anglo-Australian individual and either a Muslim Middle-

Eastern-Australian or an Indian-Australian individual, both of whom matched on all other characteristics (i.e. gender, age, class etc.), separately phoned potential landlords to inquire about accommodations, and then arranged a viewing of the property. After these interactions, testers recorded details of their experiences with the landlord, including the degree to which they were encouraged to apply for the apartment, the information they were given about the property, etc. The study found that Anglo-Australian testers were most likely to be offered individual viewings of properties, were more likely to be given information about other housing options from landlords, and were provided more information about the housing application process.

In the Canadian context, several scholars have investigated racialized residential segregation in urban areas (Balakrishnan & Gyimah, 2003; Fong & Shibuya, 2000; Walks & Bourne, 2006). Attention has also been paid to the housing challenges faced by refugees in Winnipeg, Manitoba (Silvius, Al-Ubeady, Halldorson, & Praznik, 2015) and Teixeira and Li (2015), in their edited book, have examined the housing experiences of other immigrants to Canada and the United States. Dion's (2001) study of different newcomer groups' experiences in the Toronto housing market, using a questionnaire survey, found that Somali and Jamaican immigrants in Toronto perceived greater individual and group discrimination when searching for rental housing than Polish immigrants. Another important study by Teixeira (2008) involved distributing a questionnaire about housing search experiences to Angolan, Mozambican, and Cape Verdean immigrants in Toronto. While these specific groups shared a common language (Portuguese), the findings revealed that the darker skinned Angolans and Mozambicans reported more difficult housing searches and more racial discrimination in the housing market than did lighter skinned Cape Verdean immigrants, leading the author to conclude that "the colour of

one's skin affects housing searches, particularly for 'Black' immigrants from Angola and Mozambique" (p. 268).

Several Canadian reports on housing discrimination more broadly have also revealed patterns of racial housing discrimination. For example, a report prepared for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) in 2002 on housing discrimination in Canada found that almost all of the 40 participants interviewed agreed that racial housing discrimination occurs in Canada, with some offering personal examples. However, the degree to which participants perceived racial housing discrimination as common differed depending on the community they belonged to. As the report explains,

Where there was a large proportion of Aboriginal people, regardless of community size, racial discrimination was reported to be common. Otherwise, racial discrimination was generally perceived to be less common in smaller communities, or those where there are proportionately fewer racial minority people. (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2002, p. 47)

The Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA), a not-for-profit organization based in Toronto, conducted a telephone audit study in Toronto in 2008, using five different profiles of potential tenants. These profiles covered a wide range of intersecting identities, including race, gender, class, disability, and family status. While the report concluded that housing discrimination is prevalent in the city, particularly against those with mental disabilities, it also highlighted the significance of racial discrimination when it compared the situation of white and Black female lone parents, and found that the Black women were more likely to face housing discrimination than their white counterparts (Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation, 2009).

Hogan and Berry (2011) conducted an interesting study, also in Toronto, concerning racial discrimination in the context of online housing listings. The authors chose five racialized groups (Anglo-Saxon Caucasian, African-American/Black, East/Southeast Asian, Muslim/Arabic, and Jewish) that they identified as having “ethnically distinctive names” (Hogan & Berry, 2011, p. 356). They then emailed commercial landlords (those working through a rental agency) and private landlords (those renting privately owned properties) who had posted apartments on a popular advertising website, using these racialized names. Overall, Hogan and Berry found that Muslim/Arabic, African-American/Black, and East/Southeast Asian groups were the most commonly discriminated against, in that names associated with these groups were the least likely to receive a response from potential landlords. In addition, they found that private landlords were less likely to respond to these names than commercial landlords.

The authors distinguished between two types of housing-related discrimination that can occur when using email as a method for finding housing: “opportunity denying,” in which landlords reply to some inquiries but not others, and “opportunity diminishing,” in which landlords respond, but then impose more onerous conditions on certain (racialized minority) respondents, such as asking for additional personal information or requiring an extended lease agreement, in their replies to certain respondents but not others (Hogan & Berry, 2011, pp. 359-360). The authors noted as well that their study only documented discrimination at the beginning of the process of securing housing, leaving unexplored the forms of racial discrimination encountered at later stages of the housing search, such as having face-to-face encounters with landlords or the process of negotiating lease agreements.

The literature that I was able to locate on racism and housing raised many issues that have informed my thinking about the design and findings of my study on racial discrimination in off-campus housing.

Student Housing

As indicated previously, I was unable to locate a great deal of research that directly addressed racial discrimination in student housing spaces. However, in this section, I discuss the research I was able to locate, in addition to a larger, but also limited, body of research on student housing more generally. As will become apparent, work on student housing tends to be exclusively focused on either on- or off-campus housing, although many students experience both over the course of their university careers.

Several U.S.-based studies have investigated student experiences of racial discrimination in on-campus housing, such as university residences. While some studies suggest that not all racialized minority students have negative experiences (Chong & Razeck, 2014), and that living on-campus can have a positive impact on students' openness to racial diversity (Pike, 2002), others document racial discrimination in this setting. Harwood, Hunt, Mendenhall, and Lewis (2012), for instance, found that students of colour living in on-campus housing at a predominantly white university experienced racial microaggressions that included racial jokes and comments from other students, racial slurs written in shared spaces, informally segregated residence halls, and other forms of unequal treatment, experiences that left them feeling unwelcome and unsupported in their residence space. A study conducted by Harper et al. (2011) found that Black male resident assistants (RAs) in leadership roles at a predominantly white university also described negative experiences, including racist stereotypes and racial insults,

underrepresentation of RAs, supervisors, and staff members of colour, and what they perceived to be undue scrutiny and internalized pressure to succeed in their positions as resident assistants. American studies on interracial roommate pairings in on-campus housing, while not explicitly focused on racial discrimination, have found that “African American–White roommate dyads expressed significantly less roommate satisfaction than their White–White counterparts” (Phelps et al., 1998, p. 200), and that interracial roommate dyads were less likely to persist past the first year of university than same-race roommate dyads (Shook & Fazio, 2008).

Although on-campus housing is important to the social and academic integration of some students (Chong & Razek, 2014), these same students are likely to live in off-campus housing later in their university careers and, for others, off-campus housing is the only kind of housing that they experience. According to Charbonneau, Johnson, & Andrey (2006), in the Canadian context, with the exception of only a few smaller universities, “the private rental market provides the majority of student lodging in all Canadian universities” (p. 282). Along with its importance to students, off-campus housing is also significant to the wider community in university towns and cities, and thus its impact on local geographies has attracted some scholarly attention. As several authors have noted, what is referred to as “studentification” can impact communities in various ways (Sage, Smith, & Hubbard, 2012; Laidley, 2014). Laidley (2014), who writes from the U.S. context, has defined studentification as a process of change in local geographies “characterized by the simultaneous expansion of higher education and deregulation of the housing system, often leading to physical transformation and residential turnover as students occupy private rental housing in increasing numbers” (p. 753). In the United States, Laidley notes, students are increasingly forced to turn to off-campus accommodations as universities and post-secondary institutions are not able to keep up with demand for on-campus housing. Low

student incomes mean that housing close to universities, or at least close to public transportation to reduce transportation costs, is prioritized by students (see also Fields, Earhart, Liu, & Campbell, 2013 and Charbonneau et al., 2006 for the importance of off-campus housing's proximity to campus for students). The result may be changes in poverty rates and density as, for example, Zhou (2014) points out that many students share housing as a means of stretching their limited budgets.

Sage et al. (2012), in their case study of the community of Bevendean in England, found that long-term, permanent residents perceived studentification as having negative effects on the community, including negative environmental and social changes and community decline. Such perceptions were linked to student marginalization as, for example, when members of the broader community condemned students for holding parties and allegedly not looking after their residences. As a result, students came to be viewed as a "problem population" (Sage et al., 2012, p. 1071).

In the Canadian context, Charbonneau et al. (2006) note that in the city of Waterloo, Ontario, students make up approximately 25% of the city's population, and 60% of students live in off-campus rental housing. In this city, they found that student housing was significantly concentrated in areas close to the university campus, that students lived in a variety of building types and living arrangements, and that the market had greater numbers of "traditional" landlords, who owned only one property and were local residents, than "entrepreneurial" or commercial landlords. Similarly, in a study of student housing in the university town of Sackville, New Brunswick, Black (2002) found that most of the participants in his study rented houses and apartments close to the university campus, and that many lived in shared accommodations with multiple roommates. Charbonneau et al. also found that, while the

university provided support for students searching for off-campus accommodations (although the nature of these supports were not described), students did not generally access these services.

Another reference to universities directly engaging with off-campus housing is found in the case of Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, where the university has established an "Office of Town-Gown Relations" which educates students about their rights and responsibilities as tenants and mediates conflicts between student renters and community members (Frierson, 2005).

McEwan and Teixeira (2012), in a study of student youth rental housing experiences in Kelowna, British Columbia, found that students encountered several barriers in their housing experiences, including the high cost of housing in Kelowna, and issues with transportation, location, and the availability of off-campus housing. In addition, the authors found that some students felt that various forms of discrimination by landlords were barriers in their housing experiences. For example, landlords were described as assuming that students would be disruptive tenants, and as taking advantage of students' unfamiliarity with the Residential Tenancy Act.

Within the small body of research on off-campus housing, the experiences of international students have garnered some attention. In a U.S. study, Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) note that some international students living in a semi-urban campus community felt forced to live off-campus because of the high cost of on-campus living, and that they were unprepared for the task (and cost) of finding the supplies and furnishings necessary for off-campus living. In Australia, Obeng-Odoom (2012) notes that limited knowledge of local housing markets, along with time pressures and limited funds, can complicate the housing searches of international students. These students, the author argues, are also disproportionately

vulnerable in many ways as tenants in these markets. Some of the issues that Obeng-Odoom reports included incidents of international students being:

wrongfully ejected, forced to pay for costs such as repairs, for which they are not legally responsible, or asked to fulfil onerous responsibilities in their tenancy agreements. Some suffer from invasion of privacy and the rent of others is arbitrarily increased, while for others, no receipt is ever given to them for rental payment. Most international students are not given tenancy contracts, some are victims of internet scams, while others do not get their bond refunded. (p. 209)

While Obeng-Odoom notes that domestic students in Australia can also face similar difficulties, when comparing previous research on domestic students to his survey data on the housing experiences of international students, he argues that international students experience them disproportionately. Additional research conducted in Nova Scotia reveals how off-campus searches and living experiences are more difficult for international students who are not familiar with local housing options and laws (Foster, Williams, & Andres, 2014), and another study on the experiences of international students attending British universities also points to how student housing searches are complicated by intersecting discriminations based on race, language, and disability (Soorenian, 2013).

In the literature that I was able to access, the limited attention to students' experiences of racism in off-campus housing tended to be found in studies of university students' experiences of racial discrimination more generally. In the Canadian context, for example, Grayson (2014), in a study of both international and domestic students' experiences of racial discrimination at four Canadian universities, found that a relatively small portion of respondents who responded to their questionnaire reported "unfair treatment" from landlords. However, among those who did,

Chinese international and Black students reported the most unfairness. Currie et al. (2012), in a larger study of Aboriginal university students' experiences of racial discrimination in "a mid-sized city in central Canada" (p. 617), conducted "in-person surveys" with 60 participants and found that just over one quarter of their participants had experienced housing-related discrimination. This discrimination was usually perpetrated by landlords, either in the form of discriminatory comments, or of students being told that apartments were no longer available when they arrived at a viewing or when they provided their Aboriginal names. Aboriginal students described dealing with this discrimination by simply walking away from an offensive landlord, or helping other Aboriginal friends with "dark skin" (who were presumably more likely to be identified as Aboriginal by landlords and therefore to be victims of discrimination) to secure housing (Currie et al., 2012, p. 622). These important findings have inspired me to examine the issue of racial discrimination in off-campus housing in the Niagara Region.

This chapter has provided an overview of the central tenets of critical race theory that inform this study, including the social construction of race, white privilege, and the importance of intersectionality. I have also offered a review of some relevant research that I was able to locate, drawn from a number of different literatures including those relating to racism in university spaces, racial discrimination in housing, and student housing. As is apparent from the latter, however, there is limited research that is directly focused on my area of interest. Despite this challenge, the existing research that I have reviewed has provided inspiration as well as direction and insight for the research questions, design, and analysis of the findings of this project.

Chapter 2

Researching Racial Discrimination in Off-Campus Housing

This chapter will outline the methodology of my thesis, including my reflexivity as a researcher, the methodological framework used in this study, and the research methods used. I will then discuss the process of recruiting the 14 student participants, the dynamics of the joint and individual semi-structured, qualitative interviews that I conducted, and ethical considerations for this project.

Positionality

It is extremely important for me to engage in reflexivity, which includes exploring the ways in which my positionalities may influence the research process. According to Berger (2015), reflexivity is defined as “the process of a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of researcher’s positionality as well as active acknowledgement and explicit recognition that this position may affect the research process and outcome” (p. 220). My various social positions are important to take into consideration, as they influence not only my broader understanding of racial discrimination in off-campus housing, but also my interpretation of what was shared by the participants in this study, and the conclusions drawn. The previously mentioned concept of intersectionality, a central tenet of critical race theory, is also important to this discussion. According to Collins (2015), “the term intersectionality references the critical insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but as reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities” (p. 2). While various aspects of my identity can influence the

research process on their own (for example, my racialized identity or gender identity), it is also important to recognize how these social locations may interact with one another to influence my positioning within the research process, how I related to participants, and how they related to me.

Perhaps the most important aspect of my identity in the context of this study on racial discrimination in off-campus housing is my racialized positioning. The reflexivity of the researcher is important in critical race research, as Duncan (2002) explains when he states that “the significance of reflexivity is in its contribution to making visible the invisible relationships that characterize racial oppression by redirecting the focus on [the researcher’s] own perspectives” (p. 96). Researchers studying racialization and racism, and engaging with critical race theory, pay particular attention to how their racialized positioning may influence the research process (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015).

I am self-identified and externally identified as a white person, and I therefore experience many benefits of white privilege, which Delgado and Stefancic (2012) define as “the myriad of social advantages, benefits, and courtesies that come with being a member of the dominant race” (p. 87). It is important to acknowledge that my white privilege has allowed me to avoid being targeted by racism, and my racialized positioning, in contrast, benefits me in multiple ways. Here, it is useful to draw on the work of critical whiteness scholars, who seek to view whiteness as a racial category (Pruett, 2002). Levine-Rasky (2013), for example, notes that critical whiteness studies views whiteness as a racialized category, one that has been socially constructed in a similar manner to other racialized groups, and that whiteness holds power in social relations. In this study, I view whiteness as a racial category worthy of analysis, and recognize that my positionality may influence my interpretation and use of the words and stories of my participants. I do not want to speak for the racialized minority participants in my study, and therefore

perpetuate white supremacy, but hope to find a balance of centralizing their voices vis-à-vis my own voice and the voices of white participants, while also being aware of my own positioning as a white researcher (Chadderton, 2012).

My whiteness becomes especially important when interviewing Indigenous students and students belonging to racialized minorities. There has been much debate about insider/outsider status in the context of the racialized identity of the interviewer in qualitative research. In terms of establishing rapport with participants, which is important in qualitative research, it is argued by some that interviewers with racial insider status (those who share their racialized background with their participants) will have an easier time establishing this rapport (May, 2014). This racial insider status is sometimes referred to as “racial matching” between interviewer and interviewee (Twine, 2000). Interviewees may assume that researchers with racial insider status may already possess information that others do not. Interviewees may also be more likely to identify with those they perceive as being racial insiders, therefore allowing these interviewers to elicit more “authentic” information from interviewees as they feel more at ease (May, 2014). However, as Twine notes, “race is not the only relevant ‘social signifier,’” and other social factors can be equally or more important than race in a research setting (2000, p. 9), highlighting the importance of intersectionality in the research process. Being perceived as a racial insider cannot ensure that participants will identify with the researcher or feel comfortable with them, as other aspects of the researcher’s identity, such as nationality, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, disability, age, etc. may also influence the perceptions, and therefore behaviour, of the participant. There may also be certain drawbacks to having a perceived racial insider as an interviewer. In contrast to perceived racial insiders being assumed to possess particular information, it may be assumed by participants that a perceived racial outsider lacks certain

knowledge, allowing the interviewer to ask questions and gain knowledge that may have been taken for granted by a racial insider (May, 2014). While I was a racial outsider with some of the participants I interviewed, I also interviewed four white participants, and in those interviews I was a racial insider. Therefore, although my identity did not change, my status as a racial insider/outsider shifted from interview to interview.

Perhaps it may be useful to think in terms of “insider moments” (May, 2014), rather than strictly in terms of insiders and outsiders within a research setting. As May (2014) explains, “rather than experiencing a solely insider or outsider status, researchers and subjects experience ... ‘insider moments’ wherein their interests converge and they are able to share in the kinds of interactions that yield important insights” (p. 124). Researchers and participants can connect on the basis of shared knowledge or experiences, regardless of various social positionings, and meaningful exchanges can take place within these interactions. The idea of “insider moments” acknowledges that while it is difficult, if not impossible, to be an insider in all aspects of one’s identity, there is potential to connect with participants and have meaningful interactions with them, regardless of the racial identity of either party.

Other authors have provided insight into how potential tensions due to the racial insider/outsider status of the researcher can be mitigated. O’Brien (2011), citing Dunbar et al., describes the importance of “activating a racialized subject” during the interview process. As she states, this process “... gives the respondent permission to speak more about his [*sic*] racialized experiences, without worry that his [*sic*] experiences would be questioned or second-guessed” (O’Brien, 2011, p. 79). She states that one important way to activate the racialized subject is for the researcher to be open to the participant’s racialized experiences, but also to be open to their own racialized experiences and be willing to share these with the participant. In

addition, acknowledging throughout the interview that the researcher and the participant have a shared racialized understanding – for example, that racism still exists – can serve to activate a racialized subject and establish rapport (O’Brien, 2011).

I believe that I was able to activate the racialized subject to some extent in my interviews with participants. At the beginning of each interview, I began by introducing myself, and asking my participants to do the same. When introducing myself, I shared with each participant how I came to be interested in the topic of racial discrimination in off-campus housing, and also recognized the privilege that I have in my identity as a white person. For example, when discussing my undergraduate background in Sociology in one interview, I explained:

I did my undergrad in Sociology, and it was the first time that I ever had to really sit down and think about different types of discrimination, including racial discrimination. And it was the first time that I realized the privileges that I had as a white person, in my identity. And so I started really thinking about that, and it kind of weighed on me a bit. And so I started thinking about how I can try to use that privilege in a positive way, which has kind of led me to this topic as well.

Similar statements were made in all interviews that I conducted. This statement, and equivalent ones made in each interview, is not beyond analysis. I am clearly acknowledging that I have previously seen myself as racially neutral, as I had not thought about my racialized identity as a white person before being made aware of it in the context of a university course. I can also be seen as identifying as a “white helper” in attempting to use my racialized positioning for what I consider to be a worthy cause. In spite of these problematic aspects, this acknowledgement of white privilege was one way of activating the racialized subject, as I briefly shared my experience of recognizing my whiteness, and acknowledged that I am aware that white privilege exists, both in our society at large and in my own life. It was, however, difficult to know how this recognition of white privilege was received or understood by participants.

My gender identity can also be seen as positioning me as both an insider and an outsider in the interview setting. As a self-identified female, my gender identity made me an insider with the majority of participants (10 out of 14) who also identified as female. While there was the potential for a gendered power imbalance when interviewing male participants (Arendell, 1997), I did not find this to be an issue in any of the interviews, potentially because of other aspects of my identity that put me in a position of relative power in the interview setting. However, my positioning as a female does have the potential to influence my interpretation of the words of participants, as my gendered experiences may be quite different from those I interviewed.

As a graduate student interviewing undergraduate and graduate students, it could be argued that I possessed relative privilege. I believe, however, that the small age difference between myself and the participants that I interviewed (I was 23 years old at the time of the interviews, and therefore close in age to many of the participants), in addition to my status as a fellow Brock University student, served to lessen the significance of this difference. My identity as a student was something that I had in common with all participants, and this may have made the interview seem less formal than if I had been, for example, a professor conducting the interview. These similarities may have made me seem less intimidating as an interviewer.

Another aspect of my identity that I mentioned to participants at the beginning of each interview was the fact that I am not originally from the Niagara Region, having moved from Manitoba to study at Brock University. This, I believe, positioned me as a partial outsider in the interview setting, in that I was often less familiar with certain areas of St. Catharines and the Niagara Region than many of the participants. This reality was in some ways, I believe, beneficial, insofar as I felt free to ask probing questions about certain aspects of the area (for example, a private housing company that houses many Brock University students) that an

interviewer who was more familiar with the region may not have pursued. As mentioned, being an outsider in a research setting allows researchers to “take less for granted and hence ask more probing questions about the subjects’ lives than would an insider” (May, 2014, p. 118).

Throughout this project, I have tried to cultivate reflexivity as a researcher. While much of the above discussion focuses on the dynamics of the interviews, I have also thought about these issues of positioning in terms of their significance for the research project as a whole. Below I address issues of research methodology in greater detail before moving in subsequent chapters to the analysis of the interview material.

Thinking about Methodology

The research question that guided the framing of the study, the questions asked in joint and individual interviews, and the analysis of interview data, was: To what extent and in what ways do students at Brock University experience or observe racial discrimination in the course of seeking out and/or living in off-campus housing in the Niagara Region?

To address this question, I decided to employ a general qualitative methodology, informed by critical race theory. When making this decision, further reading about whiteness and white researchers studying racial discrimination caused me to think more deeply about the use of critical race theory in my research. My approach was influenced by Bergerson’s (2003) suggestion that, while white researchers should be informed by critical race theory, they should not position themselves as critical race scholars. Bergerson’s position came out of her experience of taking a graduate seminar about the use of CRT, and hearing another student in the seminar voice concerns that “CRT would be colonized by whites using it to further their own interests” (Bergerson, 2003, p. 56). Bergerson’s reflections caused me to think more carefully

about my own positionality as a white researcher, and I realized that I had failed to consider how my use of critical race theory, which was developed by people of colour to critique and challenge systemic racist practices (Bergerson, 2003; Parker & Lynn, 2002), could be seen as a colonizing practice. Following Bergerson's suggestion, then, I use the insights of critical race theory to inform my own understanding of race and racial discrimination, without claiming to be a critical race researcher.

As I discuss further below in terms of methods, my original plan was to use focus groups and follow-up interviews as the methods for this study, but this changed to joint and individual semi-structured, qualitative interviews during the course of the research. Consistent with the goals of qualitative research and central tenets of critical race theory, the goal was to use methods (first focus groups, then interviews) that would allow me to centre the voices and experiences of participants (Creswell, 2013; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). While centring the voices of racialized minority participants was my priority, white participants were not explicitly excluded as participants, and the fact that white participants came forward in response to recruitment efforts meant that I also included some critical analysis of white privilege in off-campus housing. While there are limitations to a small scale qualitative study, one of the most notable being that this cannot be generalized to broader populations or phenomena, such research is important, particularly when an area is under-researched. Given the paucity of information available on racial discrimination in off-campus housing in Canada, this small scale qualitative study is a contribution that can be used to inform larger scale work in the future.

Recruitment

This study was conducted in Ontario's Niagara Region, with respondents drawn from the student population at Brock University. As a graduate student at Brock University, I was well situated to carry out this research and to interact with other students, as recruitment took place at the university itself. Brock University is a medium sized post-secondary institution, with over 18,800 undergraduate and graduate students (Brock University, n.d., All about Brock 2014-15). In terms of the student population, there are currently more female students (57%) than male (43%). While there is no readily available information about the racialized composition of Brock, information is available from 2014/15 about the origin of international students, which indicates that they made up 10 percent of the student body (Brock University, n.d., All about Brock 2014-15). The vast majority of these international students were from Asia (73%), followed by students from Central and South America and the Caribbean (9%) and Europe (8%). The remaining international students originate from Africa, Oceania, and North America (Brock University, n.d., All about Brock 2014-15).

In terms of faculty, the 2014/15 report states that Brock employed approximately 900 faculty and staff (Brock University, n.d., All about Brock 2014-15). Brock University has stated that it is committed to employment equity, as outlined in the collective agreement between the Brock University Faculty Association and university administration. This agreement is extended to four groups: women, Aboriginal peoples, members of visible minorities, and persons with disabilities (Collective agreement between Brock University and the Brock University Faculty Association (BUFA), 2014). Despite the stated commitment to employment equity, I was unable to locate any public information about the representation of Indigenous peoples or visible minorities within the Brock University faculty.

Brock University is situated in Canadian Niagara, a primarily white area with longstanding Indigenous and racialized minority populations. Being a border region, this area also has significant racialized minority newcomer and refugee populations, as well as visible minority temporary migrant workers employed in the agricultural sector (Helleiner, 2012). The location of the Niagara Region on the American/Canadian border puts it in close contact with Buffalo, New York, a city marked by a racially segregated urban geography (Housel, 2009).

My study of racial discrimination and student housing occurred in the context of increased public discussion about racism at Brock University. This heightened discussion followed an incident that occurred at the beginning of the 2014-2015 academic year involving the use of blackface by undergraduate students at a Halloween party hosted by the Brock University Students' Union. Four students, dressed as the Olympic Jamaican bobsled team, attended the party in blackface, and proceeded to win \$500 in the costume contest (Brock University students in blackface win Halloween contest, 2014). This event gained a great deal of public attention, and sparked a debate about racism on campus. This is not the first time that an incident involving blackface has occurred at the school, as costumes involving blackface were also worn in 2007 and 2009 with similar disciplinary results (see Traoré, 2014). In addition to these incidents, in the winter of 2016 a Brock University professor wrote about the persistence of racism at the university in the Brock Press, a Brock University student newspaper (Kitossa, 2016). In the article, this professor described some of his personal experiences of racism at Brock, while also pointing out "the higher administration's indifference toward pervasive racism at Brock University" (Kitossa, 2016, para. 11), arguing for increased diversity in the administration and acknowledgement of the complacent attitudes toward racism in the university

culture. This professor's account provides further evidence of racism at the university, and of the need to identify this racism in order for change to occur.

Posters briefly outlining the study were posted in different buildings around the Brock University main campus in St. Catharines, in an effort to reach as many students as possible from various academic programs (see Appendix A). These recruitment posters were put up on bulletin boards across campus between Sept. 8 and Oct. 20, 2015 on three separate occasions. The posters proved the most successful method of recruitment, with 8 of the 14 participants finding out about the study either from reading the posters or from friends who had seen the posters.

In addition to the posters, I also made recruitment announcements in four different undergraduate classes in the Sociology department. These announcements resulted in three participants contacting me and taking part in interviews. I also sent emails to 11 student groups at Brock University linked to specific cultural and international student populations, informing them about the existence of the study, giving a brief description, and inquiring as to whether they would be able to let their members know about the project. This proved to be the least effective method of recruitment, with only one student group responding to the email. One participant found out about the study through a personal connection through my own network. I am unsure how the remaining two participants found out about the study, but it is likely that they either saw the recruitment posters or learned about the study through word of mouth (for example, through friends who also participated). In total, I had 23 inquiries and interviewed 14 participants, exceeding my original goal of 10.

Recruiting participants at Brock University had both advantages and challenges. In many ways, the university was an ideal setting in which to recruit students, and my status as a graduate student at Brock meant that I was familiar with this setting. I had easy access to the campus, and

also to various forms of recruitment. Both the students I interviewed and myself were on campus regularly, which provided some degree of flexibility in scheduling interviews. All of the interviews were conducted on campus, which provided a convenient and familiar space for participants. One of the challenges of recruiting university students, however, was that their busy schedules made scheduling mutually convenient times difficult.

Participants were offered a \$20 incentive in the form of a Tim Hortons gift card for their participation in the study, which may have encouraged some to participate. The incentive was offered in order to make busy and generally financially stretched students more willing to participate, but may have had the unwanted outcome of students participating primarily because of the incentive. Some participants did mention in the interviews that the first thing they noticed about the study (presumably from the recruitment posters) was that an incentive was offered, and that this influenced their decision to participate. While the incentive may have led to more responses from students in financial need, I did not ask explicitly about financial issues and so cannot speculate further about this possibility.

An unexpected challenge in recruiting students in a university setting was the expectation from some participants (and potential participants) of receiving course credit for their participation in the study, as this is the case for other studies recruiting undergraduate students. Several potential participants, in their initial inquiries about the study, asked whether they would receive course credit if they participated. I told these individuals that participation in the study would not count toward their course credit, and did not hear back from most of them. One of these individuals still decided to participate, even after I clarified that course credit would not be offered. Another participant that was interviewed, in response to the first interview question, stated that they were interested in participating in the study because they needed course credit.

This unanticipated issue confounded my expectation that all participants would be primarily motivated by a desire to share their perceptions of and experiences with racial discrimination in off-campus housing. The challenge of interviewing students prompted by other motives was especially evident in the case of one participant (white, male, domestic) who, it was discovered throughout the course of the interview, had never lived in off-campus housing and knew of only one person who had, with the result being that this interview was quite short (12 minutes), and yielded few insights.

The 14 participants interviewed for this study were all Brock University students. Participants were asked to self identify in terms of their racialized identity, gender identity, and student status (domestic or international) on the consent form before the interview began (see Appendix B). These identities were asked of the participants to aid in data analysis, and to provide greater insight into the statements made by participants. I did not want to assume the identities of any of the participants, and wanted to give them an opportunity to identify themselves as they saw fit, and therefore asked them to do so on the consent form. The participants were sufficiently varied that I achieved my original goal of recruiting racially diverse and mixed gender domestic and international participants. The self-identified racialized identities of participants as written on the consent form were as follows: Aboriginal, Asian, Indian, Italian, Desi (Pakistani), Pakistani, Black (Trinidadian), Nigerian (African), Mixed black/white, Guyanese & Vincentian/Caribbean, White (3), and Caucasian. In terms of gender identities, four of the participants identified as male, and 10 identified as female. With the exception of one international student, all other participants were domestic students. The identities of participants appear throughout the thesis as they were originally reported on the consent form. In addition to these identifiers, each participant has been assigned a number, in an

effort to clearly distinguish between participants throughout the thesis. The identities of each participant are outlined in a chart in Appendix C.

Qualitative Interviewing

As previously mentioned, the research methods that I had planned to employ changed in the course of data collection. I had originally planned to use focus groups as the primary method in this study. One of the main reasons for my attraction to focus groups as a method was my interest in providing an opportunity for participants to interact with each other while discussing questions relating to racial discrimination in off-campus housing (see Kress & Shoffner, 2007 on the value of focus groups). My original goal was to first conduct two or three focus groups consisting of 3-5 students each, and then to invite those willing to participate in an individual follow-up interview in which they could elaborate on any experiences that they were not able to fully discuss in the focus groups. As the topic of racial discrimination is a sensitive one, it was anticipated that some participants might take up the option of elaborating on their perceptions and experiences in a one-on-one setting.

When individuals actually began to contact me, however, I immediately found that focus groups would be difficult, if not impossible, to organize. One reason for this is that student schedules are quite busy and varied, and my participants generally had small windows of time in which to meet with me. It was therefore difficult to determine mutually convenient times for focus groups. In addition, as participants did not generally contact me all at the same time, I had no way of knowing whether there would be a sufficient number of participants for a focus group. I was therefore inclined to set up interviews with each participant as they contacted me, in order to maintain their interest in the study and not keep them waiting for a focus group that might not

actually occur. While I did manage to arrange one group of three participants into a focus group early in the interview process, one of the participants who was scheduled to participate did not show up, meaning that only two participants were present. While this was disappointing at first, the experience pushed me into using a method I was not even aware of at the time – joint interviews.

According to Polak and Green (2015), a joint interview consists of one interviewer and two participants/interviewees. Joint interviews have also been called dyadic interviews, conjoint interviews, or couple interviews, as they have been widely used to interview married couples (Polak & Green, 2015; Riley, 2014). Joint interviews have some similarities to focus groups, which made them a good alternative to use for this project. For example, Morgan, Ataie, Carder, and Hoffman (2013) explain that, similar to focus groups, the

process of sharing and comparing also occurs in dyadic interviews, as the participants respond to each other. Thus, what focus groups and dyadic interviews have in common is not just the broader equivalence of relying on interaction but also the specific processes that make this interaction of interest to researchers. (p. 1277)

Therefore, through the use of joint interviews, something of the collaborative aspect of focus groups is maintained. Morgan et al. (2013), however, warn against thinking of joint interviews as simply smaller versions of focus groups, given that the dynamics of a pair can be quite different from those of a larger focus group.

In the end, I conducted three joint interviews, using the same interview questions that I had planned to use for the focus groups, and that were also used in individual interviews with other participants. As mentioned, the first joint interview occurred when one participant did not show up to a scheduled focus group. In this case, the two participants did not know each other

prior to the interview. In contrast, the other two joint interviews involved pairs who were friends, and therefore had relationships with each other prior to the interview. In both of the latter cases, one of the participants had contacted me about participating in the study, and mentioned that they had a friend who would also like to participate. As I was still hoping that my study would benefit from the discussion and exchange between participants in the interview setting, I gave both individuals the option of either participating separately, or being interviewed together. In both cases, the pairs of friends chose to be interviewed together.

It is interesting to consider whether the dynamics of the joint interviews were influenced by the relationships between participants. Morgan et al. (2013), when discussing possible directions for future research using joint interviews, note that “we know a moderate amount about closely related dyads such as married couples, but by comparison we know very little about pairs of friends or acquaintances, and almost nothing about two-person interviews with strangers” (p. 1281). Researchers have noted that, in the case of intimate partners, the power dynamics of the couple may influence responses, as participants may change their answers to interview questions when their partner/spouse is present (Boeije, 2004). Large power imbalances may lead to “acquiescence bias” on the part of the person with less power (Caldwell, 2014). In all of the joint interviews in this study, it is difficult to assess the degree to which power imbalances (for example, in terms of racism, sexism, classism, etc.) may have been present in this context. However, in the case of the joint interviews with pairs of friends who had relationships prior to the interview, the ease that the interviewees felt seemed to be reflected in longer interview lengths (approximately 40 minutes each). In contrast, the first joint interview in this study was conducted with two participants who did not know each other prior to the interview, and lasted less than 14 minutes, with the same number of questions asked. The

discrepancy in joint interview lengths, however, may have also reflected my inexperience as an interviewer, as the shorter joint interview was only the third interview in the study, whereas the longer two were seventh and ninth.

The joint interviews in this study were used in conjunction with semi-structured, qualitative interviews with individual participants, using the same questions as the joint interviews. These individual interviews were conducted with the majority of participants (9 out of 14), with one participant taking part in both an individual interview and a joint interview. This participant was the first to be interviewed, and due to the small number of new participants for the potential focus group, I decided to ask her if she would be willing to also participate in the focus group. She agreed; however, as one scheduled participant did not show up, as previously mentioned, the focus group ended up being a joint interview.

Qualitative interviews, as Harding (2013) notes, are generally used in order to elicit personal stories from the interviewee and to determine the meanings they attach to their experiences. Whether joint or individual, qualitative interviews allow participants to share their own experiences and/or observations in their own words. The use of qualitative interviewing is important in research that draws on critical race theory, as this type of research prioritizes counter-stories that challenge dominant ideologies (for example, that racism does not exist in a multicultural Canada, or that racism is a problem perpetuated by individuals, and not a systemic problem). Solorzano and Yosso (2002) note that counter-stories may involve both personal accounts, and/or a retelling of the stories of others.

Qualitative interviews allowed participants in this study to describe their own and/or others' experiences or observations of racial discrimination in off-campus housing in the Niagara Region in their own words, in the context of a research study that aimed to amplify their voices

and experiences. Participants themselves noted that having their experiences and voices heard and researched was important to them. For example, at the beginning of one interview, the participant explained why she was interested in participating in the study:

And so, this was one of the first things I saw on the bulletin board, and I'm like, oh my gosh, like, I can have a voice, this is great. So, yeah, I was really intrigued, and I thought, hey, why not? Like, I have some experiences, and I'd love to contribute, so why not? (P13, Nigerian (African), female, domestic)

In this case, the participant was interested in the study, at least in part, because she felt that her voice would be heard. Other participants noted their interest in simply talking about their experiences of racial discrimination with someone, and the interviews provided a space for those conversations to take place. Some participants also expressed a hope that their contributions to the study, and the study itself, would bring awareness to the issue and lead to change, ultimately improving the future experiences of students.

As mentioned, all participants were required to sign a consent form outlining the details of the study before each interview took place, and were compensated for their time with a \$20 Tim Hortons gift certificate. Participants were told that they might be contacted for a follow-up interview, in keeping with the original plan for the focus groups. As the interviews ended up either taking place in dyads or in an individual setting, however, I was able to ask follow-up questions during the interview, and so I decided not to pursue follow-up interviews. Questions in the joint and individual interviews were centred on gaining insight into the ways in which participants themselves and/or those that they knew had experienced racism in their search for and life in off-campus housing in the Niagara Region (see Appendix D). All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Participants were given the option to review their transcripts, in order to add, delete, or clarify anything they said in the interview. More than half of the participants elected to view their transcripts, but none made any revisions to the original copy.

After all of the interviews were transcribed and approved by those participants who requested to view them, I began the process of data analysis, using a tailored version of Rubin and Rubin's (2012) process for analyzing qualitative interviews. This process included coding the interviews, which Rubin and Rubin define as "*defin[ing], find[ing], and mark[ing] in the text ... excerpts that have relevant concepts, themes, events, examples, names, places, or dates*" (2012, p. 190, emphasis in original). Codes were then sorted into themes, and illustrative quotations from the interviews were identified.

Interview Process

All of the interviews for this study were conducted on the Brock University campus in group study rooms in the campus library. This space was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, conducting the interviews on campus provided a familiar space for both the interviewees and myself. The second reason was one of convenience – it was relatively easy for me to book study rooms on campus around the interviewees' schedules on short notice. Thirdly, the library study rooms provided an ideal balance of public and private, with large windows providing the feeling that we were in a public space, but also allowing a quiet environment where the interview would not be interrupted and we would not be overheard.

The interviews ranged in length, from 12 to 40 minutes. The shortest interviews were generally conducted with individual participants, while those that were longer in length were generally the joint interviews with two participants. While the interviews ran quite smoothly, at least four participants expressed confusion as to what they should write as their self-identified racialized identity, and asked me what they should write. This confusion was not exclusive to racialized minority students or white students, as both had questions regarding what they should

write as their racialized identity. As I did not want to judge their racialized identity or make any assumptions, I told them to write whatever they wanted or felt was most appropriate, and I also told some participants what I would write as my racialized identity if I were filling out the consent form myself (e.g. White, female, domestic).

Ethical Considerations

After the initial email inquiry, both the consent form outlining the subject and purpose of the study and the interview questions were emailed to each participant before the interview. For those who appeared, the consent form was also reviewed orally before each interview began. Participants were informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Participants were also informed throughout the research process that their information would be kept confidential and that their names would not appear in any publications resulting from the study. They were notified that anonymous quotations would be used with self-identified racialized identity, gender identity and student status (domestic or international) as the only personal identifiers. In addition, participants were asked to use respectful language throughout the interview. This was especially intended for the originally intended focus groups, in order to mitigate possible psychological risks for other participants; however, I chose to remind participants of this in all interviews. While I asked this of participants because of my own social justice orientation, concerns about ethics (in terms of limiting psychological risks for participants), and potentially because of my own fears of negotiating offensive comments as the interviewer, it is possible that this reminder to use respectful language may have inhibited what participants said to me during the interview. Participants may have been afraid of offending me or saying something that they thought I would interpret as disrespectful. In addition, it is

possible that this reminder served to limit participants' critiques of white racism, as it may have been perceived that I, as a white interviewer, would interpret these critiques as disrespectful or offensive in some way. While this was not my intention, it is important to note the possible effects of my request for participants to use respectful language during individual interviews, a request that I would think more deeply about in the future.

Participants were given the opportunity to specify how they would like to be identified on the consent form before the interview began. After all of the information on the form had been reviewed with each participant, the consent form was signed, and the recorded interview took place. Because the decision to use joint interviews instead of focus groups happened during data collection, the original consent form was used, which included mention of focus groups. I explained to all participants while orally going over the consent form that, due to scheduling issues, focus groups were no longer a part of the study, in order to eliminate confusion.

Following transcription, all possibly identifying information, including names of landlords or roommates, street names, addresses, etc. were removed from interview transcripts in order to ensure confidentiality. One participant, both during and after the interview, asked that certain details of the experiences he shared not be included in the final thesis, as he was worried that certain aspects of the stories might pose a risk to those whom he discussed. The decision was made to remove the names of well known private housing companies in the area. I chose, however, to include the name of Brock University in the final thesis, as understanding some of the specificity of the regional setting might be helpful for future research. In addition, any interested party would be able to easily identify my university affiliation through a simple internet search.

This chapter opened with a self-reflexive discussion of positionality, and then moved to the decision to use a general qualitative methodology that draws on critical race theory. The details of participant recruitment and identification were provided. I discussed the reasons for a change in methods from focus groups to joint and individual interviews, and then presented some of the details and processes of the interviews themselves. The approach to the analysis of the interview transcripts was shared, as were some of the ethical considerations relating to identification of the participants and research site.

Chapter 3

Being a Student in Off-Campus Housing

The experiences and observations that participants shared in interviews proved to be much broader in scope than originally anticipated. Although the initial project and interview questions focused on racial discrimination in off-campus housing, the experiences and observations of participants also covered several other issues, and provided a more complete picture of the issues and complications that students experience when searching for and living in off-campus housing. With this in mind, this chapter focuses on the broader range of issues that participants described, including reasons for searching for off-campus housing, some of the challenges of the housing search and subsequent off-campus housing experiences, and the perceived reasons for these difficulties, including students' inexperience navigating the housing market and the power of landlords. This chapter provides some contextualization for the much fuller discussion of racial discrimination which is addressed in the next two chapters

Student Housing Options

One of the issues discussed by participants revolved around why they looked for off-campus housing instead of pursuing on-campus living (e.g. residences provided by Brock University). Three participants mentioned that they felt as though on-campus housing spaces were difficult to access, and therefore decided to look for housing off-campus. One participant summed up this problem by saying, "I know it's very hard to get a residence on-campus, so most students will be looking for a house outside of campus" (P12, Asian, male, international). This participant also mentioned how the difficulty in accessing on-campus housing created particular

challenges for international students moving to the region. Brock University had 2,389 residence beds available for students in the 2014-15 academic year, which is a relatively small number compared to the over 18,000 undergraduate and graduate students who attended that same year (Brock University, n.d., All about Brock 2014-15). Most of these beds were guaranteed for full-time first year students coming directly from high school or outside of Ontario and/or transferring from other institutions (Brock University, n.d., Frequently asked questions). The 2015-16 academic year saw the opening of a new 86 bed university-owned residence building specifically for upper-year and graduate students (Brock University, n.d., Gateway suites). As can be seen by these figures, the number of Brock residence spaces remains far below the number of students needing accommodation. While the lack of availability is an important reason for not living on-campus, some students may have other reasons for choosing off-campus accommodations. For example, one participant mentioned that, “I didn’t apply for on-campus living, because I wanted to find, like, a home” (P5, Aboriginal, female, domestic). Elaborating on this statement, she explained:

... I need, like if I’m used to having space, you know, a washer and dryer and all this other stuff, you know, that was one of my lists of what I, what my needs were. And it’s different if you’re just going from maybe your parent’s house to coming here. (P5, Aboriginal, female, domestic)

As this statement suggests, on-campus living may not be appealing to students who would prefer to live in an environment that feels more like a home instead of a room in a dormitory. Mature students already used to having their own space, for example, may be more interested in off-campus options. The higher cost of on-campus housing was also seen as a drawback by some participants who might have otherwise considered this option. One participant described comparing on-campus and off-campus options, and deciding that it would be less expensive to live off-campus:

While I was thinking about if I should live residence or off-campus, I thought about it and I did my calculations, and I thought about it, and I was like, I'm just going to save a lot more, I'm going to save three, four thousand dollars if I stay off-campus. That's the reason why I decided to stay off-campus. (P2, Desi (Pakistani), male, domestic)

The perception that off-campus options may be cheaper than on-campus accommodations, then, is one of several reasons that students chose to pursue off-campus housing.

The majority of Brock students have some experience with off-campus housing, and participants discussed their views of this sector of the housing market. It was noted by several participants that certain off-campus spaces in the region were predominantly populated by students. At least three participants mentioned that they had seen streets in St. Catharines that were almost solely dedicated to student housing, suggesting a possible "studentification" of those areas (Laidley, 2014). Participants also noted that much of this housing was controlled by local private housing companies that owned multiple properties in these areas. For example, one participant explained that:

They [private housing company] own practically all of [street in St. Catharines]. 'Cause like, [street in St. Catharines] is, you know, the place to be, technically, if you want to get to school faster. (P11, Guyanese & Vincentian, Caribbean, female, domestic)

Private housing companies own and manage numerous properties in spaces that are desirable to students because of easy access to bus routes to the school, or other amenities such as shopping, grocery stores, etc. While securing housing through a company that owns many properties in a desirable area may be attractive to some students, some participants described how negative experiences with such companies made them wary about dealing with the same company again, thereby limiting their options. When discussing her experience with living in a house owned by one of these private companies, the same participant quoted above noted that, despite having a negative experience, it was difficult to avoid dealing with the company again because of their near monopoly of property on a desirable street. Because of her previous negative experiences

with her landlord, this participant did not want to deal with this particular private housing company in subsequent housing searches, making her housing search more difficult and excluding her from potentially desirable areas where this company owned a large amount of property.

Difficulties of Finding Off-Campus Housing

During the interviews, all participants were asked about their perceptions of the ease or difficulty of searching for housing in the Niagara Region. While a few participants stated that it was relatively easy to find and secure housing in the region (including one white participant and two racialized minority participants), the majority of participants spoke of the challenges they faced, and concluded that it was, overall, a difficult process. In some cases, the problems encountered in finding and securing housing came as a surprise. For example, one participant described how her expectations, which were partially based on her brother's experience of finding housing in another city in Ontario, did not match the reality of her housing search:

I remember what I thought prior to actually looking. I thought it would be really easy, really straightforward. My brother, the year before, had already moved out, 'cause he went to [city in Central Ontario], whereas I stayed close to home. And he found it relatively easy. Like, the very first place he looked at, he moved his stuff in right away. He went to [city in Central Ontario] with all his stuff, so it was just, like, now or never type of thing. And so I thought it was really going to be easy. It wasn't until, after having to drive down here a couple of times that I realized that it was actually a lot more difficult than I thought it would be. (P13, Nigerian (African), female, domestic)

For this participant, the difficulties she experienced while searching for housing in the Niagara Region created a negative view of the area, and impacted her transition to university. As she explained, her difficult housing search "completely tainted the whole experience. And I was just like – I remember just starting off the semester just being so isolated, and grumpy, and like, alone. And I'm just like, I'm pretty sure this could have started off a lot better, but it didn't"

(P13, Nigerian (African), female, domestic). For students moving to the Niagara Region from elsewhere, then, their housing searches had the potential to affect their early university experiences and first impressions of the region.

One of the stressors related to participants' housing searches was the time commitment required to find housing in the Niagara Region, which was seen as excessive. Interviewees described having to spend a significant amount of time searching for housing, including looking at listings, arranging viewings, driving from other cities to get to those viewings, and spending time looking at the accommodations themselves. Those who had to travel in order to come and view possible accommodations highlighted this point. Three participants, two racialized minority and one white, spoke about trying to arrange multiple viewings of accommodations in one visit, and two out of three of them made multiple trips of this nature. All three of these participants also spoke of how frustrating and discouraging this process was. One racialized minority participant spent five months looking for housing, and became concerned that she would not be able to attend school in the fall because of the difficulties she experienced. As she explained:

So, when I did go to look at different places, I was finding a very difficult time to find a place. And I thought, oh no. My whole year is going to be like ... I won't be able to go. So, I just kept diligent, I kept on looking at different places. I think I went to see at least seven different places. (P5, Aboriginal, female, domestic)

The experience of this participant speaks to the consequences of not finding suitable housing in a timely fashion. A lack of suitable housing can have an impact on students' studies, and as the above experience illustrates, can prevent students from attending university altogether. Along with the cost in time were associated financial costs, such as time taken from paid employment and the money spent on gas or public transportation in order to travel to look at possible

accommodations. As indicated above, the psychological stress of lengthy housing searches was another cost mentioned by participants.

Participants from outside the Niagara Region, in particular, mentioned that a lack of familiarity with the region made it difficult to know where to search for housing. One racialized minority participant mentioned that coming from outside the region to attend university could make it more difficult to find “decent” roommates, as there may not be an opportunity to move in with people that one already knows:

Especially if you’re coming in as a first year student, you don’t know, and out of the city, you don’t know a lot of people. So I think it’s hard to find people that you think are, I guess you just look at them from a certain, like, first image view, and then you just say, okay, I guess that person looks decent. I guess I can pull it off with them. (P8, Pakistani, male, domestic)

Depending on the distance from which students are coming to the region, some are not able to view their accommodations or meet future roommates before moving in. One participant who had this experience stated that, “I wasn’t really overly picky with what I got. I was just like, I need to get there, and I can’t look at it, so, I just basically kind of took what I could get” (P3, Caucasian, female, domestic). In a situation where a student cannot view their accommodations or meet future roommates before moving in, they risk entering into a lease agreement that is not what they had expected, and having to live with roommates with whom they do not get along, which were issues faced by some participants.

Regardless of where they had come from, participants mentioned being limited in their search by other constraints – most clearly, that of finances. Several participants expressed the feeling that student housing in the Niagara Region was too expensive, and that this was a major concern when looking for housing. For some, financial concerns were the most important part of

their search. For example, one participant described how the low cost of his current accommodations was the primary reason behind his decision to live there:

I really didn't ... to be honest I was only caring about the money, 'cause I'm paying \$275 per month, which is very cheap. So - I was really just caring about saving money. I didn't really care about where I was getting the home. Plus, they were giving me unlimited internet and laundry, and everything was included. (P2, Desi (Pakistani), male, domestic)

The fact that his living accommodations were relatively inexpensive while still including amenities important to student life, such as internet, was more important to this participant than location. However, for some participants, location and the price of housing were equally important. As one participant stated when asked about the perceived difficulty of finding housing in the region, "In terms of finding housing, the only difficult thing I found was finding a place that you want that's close to everything, in the price range (P11, Guyanese & Vincentian, Caribbean, female, domestic). Being close to bus routes and in close proximity to the school is important for many Brock University students, who may not have vehicles and need constant access to campus.

In a study of the value of proximity to campus for university students living off-campus in the United States, Fields et al. (2013) found that there was a premium for housing within one mile of campus, meaning that students were willing to pay more to be close to the university, and rents began to decrease when the distance from campus exceeded four miles. Landlords and property owners are aware that they can charge more rent for accommodations that are close to campus. For many of the participants interviewed for this study, the balance between cost, location, and other issues was a difficult one to achieve. One participant summed up her experience of trying to find affordable housing within other constraints, such as good access to the university campus:

I would say that ... it's a little more difficult, than easier. I think part of that is the fact that I have restrictions in where I can find housing. You know, in terms of how much rent I can pay, or the location, how far is it from school, and things like that. (P7, Indian, female, domestic)

In this case, the list of requirements that this participant had when finding a place to live made the search more difficult, as not every place would meet these requirements. As these examples demonstrate, the class backgrounds and resources available to students can seriously impact their choices and decisions about where to live, and can shape their sense of what is affordable and available to them in terms of housing. Overall, the majority of participants stated that they experienced the housing search as difficult due to moving from outside the region, the cost of lengthy searches, and various restrictions, including financial barriers, in the accommodations they could actually consider.

Student Inexperience in the Housing Market

Several participants described how the relative inexperience that many students have in navigating the housing market, including interacting with landlords and negotiating lease agreements, increased the difficulty of the search. As was pointed out, few students have prior experience with such issues, and the excitement of moving away from home for the first time, or moving off-campus after living in residence, may cause them to sign lease agreements without reading them carefully or considering the consequences of entering into a tenancy, especially if the accommodations seem favourable at the outset. One participant discussed how this relative inexperience meant, for example, that students did not always read through lease agreements or take them seriously:

I think the lack of knowledge that I had, even when he showed you the contract, I think ... the parents, I think, read over it, but then when they give it to you, I don't know, this is my own personal experience, that it's like, you kind of just skim through it. You don't

really – especially, it's first year. So you don't take those things seriously. Because you haven't experienced anything. (P8, Pakistani, male, domestic)

Having negative experiences in off-campus housing, however, can be sobering, and some participants suggested that as time went on they became more cautious when signing lease agreements. One participant explained that her previous negative experiences in dealing with landlords gave her insight into what kinds of questions to ask potential landlords in the future.

As she stated:

But, you know, I think these are experiences that make you realize that, next time you look for it, what kind of questions should you be asking. Or should you be making clear upfront. But, when you're signing agreements, you don't think of bedbugs, you know, or what if there was an issue, what would you do for us? You know, would we still have to pay an entire month of rent for suffering for two weeks until you got back to deal with the problem? Is that fair? But if there was a scratch on the wall, you would definitely charge us for it. So I think that experiences has made me more cautious in terms of what to ask the landlord before signing the agreement. But often times I think that students don't have that knowledge. (P7, Indian, female, domestic)

While students may be more cautious and diligent in their subsequent searches, participants emphasized the difficulties of their first searches, and noted how they felt that landlords took advantage of their inexperience and lack of knowledge of landlord-tenant relations, or of the housing market in general. One participant described how she and her roommates did not question being charged extra fees that they later learned they should not have been charged:

But we didn't know the rules, really, for what a landlord could and couldn't do. He charged us illegally for so many things. I'm taking him to the Landlord-Tenant Board right now. But, he ... I think he took advantage of the fact that we were young. (P4, Mixed black/white, female, domestic)

As some pointed out, the inexperience of students can be exacerbated by the pressures of student life. Many students, busy with classes, work, and extracurricular activities, may be more likely to pay extra fees or endure discriminatory or inappropriate behaviour from landlords, rather than find new accommodations. The same participant quoted above described how she

paid an illegal furniture deposit demanded by her landlord, in part because she was worried about being evicted if she did not:

And he was just like, “You’re gonna get kicked out if you don’t pay me this.” So we were all young and ... unprepared for it, really. I didn’t have the money to spend, but I said, “Well, I’m not getting kicked out, ‘cause then what am I going to do?” So yeah, I paid that. And that also, I’m taking him to the Tenant Board about that now. (P4, Mixed black/white, female, domestic)

This example speaks to the potential vulnerability of students in an off-campus housing setting. Students may be forced to endure behaviour from their landlords that they know is questionable, contrary to their lease agreement, or even illegal, because they do not have the means to move out or leave the situation.

The high cost of rent for students in the Niagara Region can also be a reason to continue to live in their accommodations despite experiencing difficulties, including discrimination. As another participant explained, students may not move out of less than desirable housing situations in order to avoid paying higher rent elsewhere or having to buy furniture and other necessities in accommodations that are not furnished:

Plus, in my case of, you know, it’s like, okay, if I’m going to move anywhere else, am I going to have to pay more rent? I think money is always an issue. Plus some of, sometimes houses then aren’t furnished ... I think pros and cons of both. You know, you have a lot of stuff, where are you going to move? You just want to suck it up. (P7, Indian, female, domestic)

This example demonstrates the possibly vulnerable position of students with regard to their social class or financial situations, and the importance that many students put on the cost of rent in deciding where to live. Those with a limited amount to spend on rent each month may be forced to live in situations where they are discriminated against or face other difficulties due to a lack of apparent options, while those with more financial resources may be able to avoid such challenges. Students may find escaping unsuitable situations difficult because of the monetary

costs involved in moving, but also due to legally binding lease agreements and a lack of time to search for new accommodations during the school year.

Students may also not challenge their landlords because they see any difficulties they are experiencing as a normal part of living off-campus. One participant commented on this phenomenon, noting that negative experiences during housing searches or while living in off-campus housing may be seen as common experiences for university students. As he stated, “So then it’s one of those things that you’re like, okay, I guess every student’s going through that. At least in your first year, that’s how you think, that this is how university life is” (P8, Pakistani, male, domestic). While one of the students quoted above eventually did take their landlord to the Landlord-Tenant Board, though not for discrimination, others may be hesitant to take legal action due to a lack of time, money, or a lack of knowledge of the legal system and tenant rights. While discussing whether or not she would think about taking a landlord to court, one racialized minority participant explained why she might be hesitant to do so:

I think that, in my case, I feel like I don’t know the system well enough to fight it. I don’t know what is right, what is wrong. At what point is this too much? I think sometimes we also get sensitized, because you expect some of these things to happen, and ... it bothers you, but it no longer bothers you, because you expect some of it to happen. And then at what point do you say, oh, this is too much. I should now go to the court. I don’t know. I don’t think that most students know what is your right, and, and what is wrong on the part of the landlord, to make any decision against the landlord. I think the landlord is also always in power, right? (P7, Indian, female, domestic)

All of the above examples demonstrate the ways in which a lack of knowledge about tenant rights and the housing market in general can impact students’ experiences in off-campus housing, from understanding lease agreements to being treated unfairly by their landlords.

As the previous section illustrates, connected to the inexperience and vulnerability of student tenants is the perceived power of the landlord in relation to students. Some participants viewed landlords as abusing their power when it came to interacting with tenants and/or

enforcing specific aspects of the lease agreement. Two participants described their feeling that landlords' claims about protecting tenants and/or their property made it difficult to question their behaviour:

P8: And they have, I would say, a tricky way of wording things as well. Because if you ask them, if you question them, they will just be like, "No, we're just doing it for the security of our own house," and then, "We're just trying to take care of you guys." And it's just, so the way they word it ...

P7: It's a fire hazard, or ... (Indian, female, domestic)

P8: Yeah, it's a fire ... So you can't even combat back by saying something, because they word it, their sentencing, in a way that's, like, they make it sound like they're the nice people there. So then it's, you - I guess, if you're living in their place, I guess it's one of the downfalls of that. (Pakistani, male, domestic)

These participants felt that some landlords abused their position of power vis-à-vis student tenants. This may lead to student tenants feeling as though they are not able to question their landlords, putting them in a powerless position in the landlord-tenant relationship.

While not highlighted to the same degree as issues with landlords, some participants did describe conflicts with their roommates over issues of noise or cleanliness. These conflicts, however, were perceived as normal roommate tensions. One racialized minority participant also described how the differing schedules of busy students can make it easier to avoid problematic roommates, while landlords may not be as easily avoided:

I think landlord's a bigger, was a bigger problem, rather than my peers, or the students I was living with. I think it's just, I think because, the reason for that is because students have different timing, so they're mostly out most of the day, and then they would come home late. So then it's, you really don't get to interact with them. Unless you know somebody, which I didn't know. (P8, Pakistani, male, domestic)

If a student tenant needs something fixed in their apartment or the landlord regularly comes onto the property for maintenance, interacting with a landlord is necessary. Although student tenants

may not see their landlords on a regular basis, negative interactions may make them uncomfortable or even feel unsafe in their own homes.

International Students

The case of international students is one that perhaps illustrates best the issues of student inexperience and vulnerability in the off-campus housing sector voiced by participants. As these students are not always familiar with the Canadian housing market and their rights as tenants, some participants mentioned that international students were most open to exploitation by both landlords and roommates. One domestic student, for example, described an incident in which her landlord expected her and her housemates to pay for the house they were renting to be cleaned before they moved out at the end of the year. When she provided evidence (in the form of a video) that she and some of her housemates had already cleaned the house, she avoided payment, but her international housemates were still charged. This participant concluded that, perhaps because these international students knew less about their rights as tenants, the landlord assumed that it would not be as difficult to get them to pay these fees:

P11: But I feel like, maybe because that, they were international students, 'cause we had two international students in our house, that it'd be easier to get money from them. Opposed to someone who was born and raised here, and had parents to help them. Because I didn't pay.

P10: Well you fought him, didn't you?

P11: Yeah I did.

P10: See?

P11: I had video and everything. No one's taking my money. And like ...

P10: But they paid, didn't they? (Italian, female, domestic)

P11: Yeah, they paid because they were still living in the house. So it's like, they took, basically took advantage. (Guyanese & Vincentian, Caribbean, female, domestic)

In this case, while domestic and international students were treated similarly in that they were initially charged the same amount by their landlord, only the international students ended up paying according to the interviewee. The perception was that a lack of knowledge of tenant rights or, as the above participant mentioned, an absence of parents or others to advocate on their behalf, played a role in the international tenants being unfairly charged.

In another example of the potential vulnerability of international students, the sole international participant described a story he had heard of another international student having his money stolen out of his room, putting him in a very precarious situation. As this participant stated,

And it's like, I can't tell you exactly the amount of money, but it's a lot of money, especially for international students. Because they get all their money support from their parents, so we don't have very, actual money to, money to cover, to recover that loss.
(P12, Asian, male, international)

The participant stated that the person who stole the money may have assumed that this international student may not have been aware of Canadian laws, and would therefore probably not call the police to inform them about the theft, thus allowing them to get away with it. It was also suggested that some landlords disproportionately blamed international student tenants for any maintenance issues on their property. The international participant quoted above also described a situation in which he overheard his landlord unjustly blaming international student tenants for a maintenance issue in the place where he was living:

one day, the temperature control was broken. And he was assuming it was one of our roommates that broke it, because the other two roommates are from outside Canada, and only one, one of the girls downstairs is a local. She's from – she was born here. In the Niagara Region. And the landlord assumed that one of us [the international tenants] actually broke the temperature control. And I heard that conversation between him and his wife in the basement. (P12, Asian, male, international)

This example demonstrates the perceived differential treatment of international and domestic students while living in off-campus housing, as this participant believed that certain housemates in his accommodations were blamed for maintenance issues because they were international students.

This international student participant also discussed some of the complexities and possible difficulties that international students face when living with “host families.” In this type of arrangement, international students are typically housed in a room in a local family’s house, ostensibly in order to help facilitate their adjustment to a new country and culture. While this participant did not live with a host family himself, he shared a story of an international student he knew who was living in such an arrangement. In this case, the participant reported that the host family was rude to the international student, and did not uphold their responsibility to provide meals for the student, as was part of their arrangement. This participant felt that these types of issues happened with such host families across the country, who he felt were primarily interested in hosting international students because of the financial benefits.

The particular vulnerability of international students is also suggested by the request from the single international student interviewee that certain other negative aspects of his experiences and the experiences of other international students that he shared not be included in this thesis, as he was worried about the consequences for himself and these individuals (a request that I have honoured). These examples demonstrate how a lack of knowledge about their rights as tenants, or those around them assuming that they lack this knowledge, can leave international student tenants vulnerable in their off-campus housing situations.

Along with the issues mentioned above, other participants pointed to the role that language barriers may play in the housing searches of international students. One participant in

particular spoke about the ways in which being uncomfortable with speaking English to landlords may have shaped the housing searches of friends who were international students:

I have a lot of international friends. So, ones from China, that don't speak a lot of English. It's hard for them to find a place that – to go through a regular landlord that I would go through – because they can't speak the language. So they're automatically at a disadvantage. Not necessarily that the person's racist against them, it's just that they don't feel comfortable speaking in English, or to an English landlord. It's easier for them to go to somewhere like [local private student housing complex], where it's a company that does it all for them, really. But ... I don't think it necessarily ... inhibits them. They just are more drawn towards companies, like [local private housing company], to do their stuff for them. (P4, Mixed black/white, female, domestic)

This participant also mentioned that language barriers may be a factor for some students in finding suitable roommates, especially if they are new to the country and do not have established social networks. Although this participant stated that language barriers do not necessarily inhibit non-English speaking students, this sentiment was contradicted later in the interview when she gave an example of a friend who experienced difficulties in her housing search due to language barriers. In this case, the participant felt that she would have an advantage over her friend if they were both looking for housing, as she does not have to contend with the language barrier:

My friend, she's from Russia, and she has a really strong accent. And she just found it hard to talk to landlords or people that were subletting rooms. A lot of people, not necessarily the landlord, but when someone's looking for subletters to fill their spot. It was hard for her to ... I don't know what it was. She was just having a hard time finding a place, where I feel like I would've been able to get it easier, just because I can speak the language clearly, and they, they almost would've trusted me more. (P4, Mixed black/white, female, domestic)

This participant's statement that a landlord would have trusted her more revealed her perception that landlords may not trust non-native English speakers as tenants, and would therefore discriminate based on language ability.

Experiences of Living in Off-Campus Housing

Besides racial discrimination, which will be discussed at length in the following two chapters, participants described experiencing difficulties in off-campus housing for a number of reasons. Some participants mentioned that their age, or their year of study, may have influenced the way certain landlords viewed them, and therefore their ability to secure accommodations. One participant, for example, described an interaction with her current landlord in which she was told that, had she not been an upper-year student, she would not have been considered for the apartment:

People kind of look down towards students. Just recently, I was moving into this new apartment, and I was talking with the landlady, and she was really nice and everything. I told her, you know, I was a fourth year student, we work hard, etc. You know, we're really quiet people. And she was like, "Well, I'm telling you right now, if you were a first year or second year student, I wouldn't have even looked at your application." (P10, Italian, female, domestic)

This participant felt that it would be much more difficult for first or second year students to find accommodations in the Niagara Region based on landlords' perceptions of these students. She considered this discriminatory, given that, as she noted, she was quiet and studious even when she was a first year student. The other participant in the joint interview in which this account was presented agreed, and explained further how her current landlord required student tenants to sign a lease agreement that precluded them from holding parties. She also added that her own age and upper-year status may have assisted her in securing her accommodations.

One participant described the experience of a student friend, in which landlords attempted to take advantage of her because of her simply being a student. She explained that her friend rented a house in need of renovations, having been promised that these renovations would be completed before she moved in. When it came time to move in, however, these renovations had not been completed, and the landlords offered unsatisfactory excuses. According to the

participant, her friend took matters into her own hands and, being “really well versed in everything housing, [she] reported them, and they got into a ton of trouble. And she ended up getting everything repainted, new countertops, new cupboards, new windows” (P13, Nigerian (African), female, domestic). Reflecting on the experience of her friend, this participant also stated:

And so, she kind of was, like, stood up for herself, and got everything she wanted, which is amazing. But it just sucked that they were like, “Yeah, we can’t really do-” like just that nonchalant, whatever, dismissive tone that people tend to take when it comes to certain people. That’s not okay. So I was just kind of like, wow, I can’t believe they thought it would be okay to try and get away with that. (P13, Nigerian (African), female, domestic)

While the landlords are described as assuming that they could leave the house as it was because the participant’s friend was young and uninformed about her rights as a tenant, this example demonstrates the agency that some students can have in their housing experiences. This student tenant took action against her landlords to improve her housing situation, demonstrating the positive changes that can occur when students are knowledgeable about their rights as tenants and the responsibilities of their landlords.

Participants also mentioned either themselves or others having issues with landlords due to their gender. Participants who shared personal experiences of having issues in off-campus housing due to their gender were all female, and one male participant described gender-related discrimination that his sister experienced while living in rental housing. One female participant, while not going into detail, stated that several of her friends have had housing-related issues related to their gender, which may have been due to landlords not taking their female tenants seriously. As she explained, “For the most part, if friends tell me anything [about issues in housing], it’s always gender related. Yeah, to them, like, oh, ‘cause we’re female, so they think ... [we’re] not as equipped, and stuff like that” (P13, Nigerian (African), female, domestic).

Illustrating this point, this same participant described the experience of one of her friends whose landlord would not respond to her requests for maintenance in her house unless her father spoke to the landlord about the issue:

I have a friend who has to deal with her landlord, and every time she tried to talk to her landlord, the landlord just wouldn't be receptive at all. And it wasn't until her dad would be like, "Hey, my daughter really needs you to fix this in her house that's been broken for, like, two weeks now." And it would be something serious, like, her shower was broken, so she can't take a shower, so she has to go to someone else's house to do it. And it's like, really? You're not going to pay attention to her? (P13, Nigerian (African), female, domestic)

While this participant attributed her friend's negative experience with her landlord to her gender, this example also speaks to the possible intersectionality of the difficulties experienced by student tenants. The age of this participant's friend may have also played a role in her landlord not taking her concerns seriously, as action was only taken when her male parent got involved.

Other participants also spoke of difficulties that they faced with their landlords that they perceived as being due to their gender. Another female participant mentioned having problems, including how she and her female housemates were not comfortable with a previous male landlord who was "very involved" in their living arrangements. According to this participant, the landlord only allowed females in the house she was renting, and became upset when they had male visitors in the house. Another participant described an incident in which a female landlord called his sister a "slut," although the context of this incident was unclear. While gender was highlighted in these accounts, the significance of intersectionality is suggested in accounts of negative experiences for those who occupy female student and sometimes racialized minority female student positionings.

In this chapter, I have discussed some of the issues that led students to off-campus housing options, including the lack of sufficient and/or affordable on-campus housing. I then

discussed interviewees' accounts of the difficulties of finding off-campus housing in the region, and how student inexperience produced certain vulnerabilities in the off-campus housing market. The case of international students was then presented as a particularly stark example of these difficulties. Finally, participants' experiences of difficulties in off-campus housing related to age and gender were described. This chapter provides important context for the discussion of racial discrimination in the following two chapters.

Chapter 4

Perceptions of Racial Discrimination in Off-Campus Housing

While the previous chapter discussed various other forms of discrimination that students may face in the off-campus housing market, this chapter addresses the initial focus of the research, which was racial discrimination. This chapter analyzes participants' perceptions and observations of racial discrimination in off-campus housing by looking at their descriptions of the Niagara Region and Brock University as exclusionary white spaces and the effects of this on racialized minority students, the significance of racialized positionings when it comes to searching for off-campus housing, and their perceptions of which landlords would be more likely to discriminate against students.

Niagara and Brock University as Exclusionary White Spaces

Although participants were not specifically asked to comment on the racial composition of the region, it is interesting to note that five participants, including two white participants, volunteered the observation that Niagara was lacking in racial diversity. Several of these participants who had moved to the Niagara Region when they began their university studies noted more specifically that, when compared to other cities or regions in Canada with which they were familiar, the Niagara Region was predominantly white. One racialized minority participant mentioned that, prior to her move to the region to attend Brock University, when her entire family was considering moving, her mother did not want to relocate her family to the Niagara Region because, "I don't think she found it, like, multicultural" (P9, Black (Trinidadian), female,

domestic). Her family eventually moved elsewhere in the province, to an area they felt was more diverse.

Some participants were explicit about the significance of a racialized geography for their own experiences in the region. One racialized minority participant, for example, linked what she described as a lack of racial diversity to a feeling of discomfort and heightened awareness of her own racialized identity. As she explained, when she first moved to the Niagara Region:

I remember, actually, being so aware of my skin colour coming down here, than anywhere in the GTA [Greater Toronto Area]. If I saw someone else who was, like, African too, I'd be surprised, 'cause I'm just like, oh, there's other Africans here. It was kind of that, like – that's shitty to think of it that way. As opposed to like, oh cool, there's another person, you know what I mean? But it's just like, because there was just ... (sighs) like, the African demographic is just really small in St. Catharines, and even just [in] the Niagara Region. (P13, Nigerian (African), female, domestic)

This participant stated elsewhere in the interview that she did not like thinking about the racial discrimination she faced, as it was uncomfortable both to personally reflect on this discrimination and to view others as racist and discriminatory. Although she did not want to have to think about it, living in the Niagara Region seemed to force her to think about race and racism more than she had to when she was living in other, more racially diverse spaces. The apparent whiteness of the Niagara Region can be seen as the result of Canada's colonial history that has legitimated white settler privilege (Razack, 2002), and erased and hidden the histories of longstanding Indigenous and communities of colour in the region.

In addition to perceiving the Niagara Region as a predominantly white space, some participants extended this observation to Brock University itself. Some racialized minority participants, for example, commented on the whiteness of the student body. When discussing the large proportion of white students at Brock, one participant speculated that this large number of white students at the university might be the reason for the existence of student clubs and

groups within the university that focus on celebrating particular cultures and racialized minority groups, as these minoritized groups, she felt, needed to create spaces for themselves within a predominantly white university space and culture:

I think that's also why there's such a need for, like, or why ... I don't know, clubs like Roots [Roots African Caribbean Society, a student group at Brock], where they try really, really hard to bring that community together. And they have a lot of events. And like, it's clear that they feel like there needs to be a need for it. Which there does, definitely. I always have mixed feelings about stuff like that though, just because I'm like, I'd rather everyone was just friends with everyone, type of thing. As opposed to, let's only stick with our culture and our group. But again, that's so debatable, so like, I don't know. Um, but yeah, there's definitely differences. (P13, Nigerian (African), female, domestic)

While some racialized minority participants highlighted the whiteness of the university, it is important to note that some white participants, in contrast, described the university as a diverse space. One participant in particular made this assertion, noting that, "we're an ... again, not international school, but we're a very multicultural school. Like ... I won't say this for every university, but Brock specifically is" (P10, Italian, female, domestic). This difference in perception can be interpreted as illustrating the ways in which racialized space can be experienced differently by those in differently racialized positions. For this participant, it appears, an unnamed whiteness was viewed as the norm at the university, making the existence of even a small proportion of any non-white students evidence of being a "very multicultural" university. However, for the racialized minority student mentioned above, the small number of other racialized minority students was experienced as evidence of the whiteness of the student body. These comments speak to the racialized dynamics of university spaces, as has been previously discussed (for example, Gilmour et al., 2012; Henry & Tator, 2009).

Participants' discussion of Niagara and Brock University as racialized spaces was linked to their discussion of off-campus housing experiences. Given the importance of off-campus housing to students, it is significant that some talked explicitly about racial discrimination as a

factor in their housing search and experiences. The perceived lack of racial diversity in the Niagara Region, for example, was linked by some racialized minority participants to more difficult searches for suitable off-campus housing. When explaining the differences between his previous experience of searching for housing in another city in Southern Ontario and a more difficult experience in Niagara, one racialized minority participant stated that:

It was much easier to get a house there, like a room there, than here. And I think for that, I would assume the reason for that was that, because we have a lot of different cultures, different, more diverse races in [another city in Southern Ontario] than in St. Catharines. I would, I think that would be the reason. Especially for that reason. (P8, Pakistani, male, domestic)

The implication of this statement, although not explicitly stated, is that, in a city with more racial diversity, potential landlords and roommates will be less likely to discriminate against those with varying racialized minority identities. In contrast, in a predominantly white city like St. Catharines, landlords and roommates may be less accepting of racialized minority tenants, making it more difficult to find housing in these spaces.

Two other racialized minority students were explicit about how their experiences of racial discrimination on the part of private landlords led them to avoid looking at any other properties in that area, which had the effect of limiting their search. As one participant explained:

One thing with mine was that, after I had a couple [incidents] with, in certain areas, I avoid going to those areas. Because it was one of those things that, I just, I don't know, as a st- I just didn't want to see the landlord anymore. It was one of those, like, I don't want to see you. And, and so then I avoided those areas. And especially if, if the area was nice, it's one of those things, it restricts your, I guess, where you're finding a house, it limits your options even more than it already was. (P8, Pakistani, male, domestic)

Another participant echoed this sentiment, stating that, "I think, just like he said, I think once you have a bad experience, you stop looking at houses in that area. 'Cause ... you label the entire area as being a bad area, you know" (P7, Indian, female, domestic). Whether it involved dealing

with the major private housing companies or wider private student housing market, these and other remarks pointed to how student housing searches and experiences could be racialized in varied ways.

The decisions that students make during their housing searches can also be affected by the perceptions of specific areas or streets within the region. Discussion about housing searches with participants revealed how certain neighbourhoods could be racialized in ways that structured student housing searches and experiences, as the following exchange between myself and one white participant revealed:

Interviewer: Have you heard of certain neighbourhoods [in St. Catharines] being more racialized, or less racialized, or ...

Participant: Yeah.

I: Yeah?

P: Yeah. For sure. My buddy with the six roommates, he lives in, I don't know if you know, [says name of neighbourhood]? (Interviewer shakes head.) ... It's known to be, kind of, there's a lot of crime. You'll hear a lot on the news, or like, in reports, of like, abductions trying to go down, and like, yeah. It's kind of a rough neighbourhood. I know that it's majority – I don't want to, like, stereotype, but it's like, I think it's mostly Black people in that area.

I: And does that influence how you think of that neighbourhood, or think of the city in general?

P: The colour of the people, or the, the crime?

I: Either one.

P: I mean, every city, pretty much, has, I guess a rougher area with higher crime rates. I - doesn't bother me really, too much. I guess if I lived there it would probably bother me, right? I probably wouldn't be walking around at, like, midnight on my own and stuff like that. But, um, yeah. I think that's it. (P14, White, male, domestic)

In this exchange, a particular neighbourhood where the interviewee's student "buddy" lived with six roommates was portrayed as marked by both criminality and Blackness and, as such, was deemed undesirable by the participant.

Perceptions of racialized space, then, may influence where students, whether white or non-white, pursue off-campus housing options. For example, a racialized minority participant described how while she was considering sharing accommodation with some "close friends" in one particular area of St. Catharines, three other friends told her that the area was "racist" – a view that she shared with her mother. Her mother's reaction, that she should avoid off-campus accommodation altogether in order to avoid racism, shaped her own decision not to pursue accommodation in that particular area:

But before I was going to live at [a student housing complex owned by a local private housing company], there was one other place I was looking at, and it was on [street in St. Catharines], just 'cause it was close friends. And my friends just told me, like, the area is racist, the area is racist. I have no idea if it was or wasn't. So, I told my mom that, and she said, like, "Don't even think of living off-campus," when she heard that. So, yeah, so if somewhere has a stereotype, it just doesn't fit my criteria for a place to live in. (P9, Black (Trinidadian), female, domestic)

As this quotation illustrates, perceptions and understandings of racialized and racist spaces may shape and limit students' housing searches, as they may be less likely to pursue housing in areas that have been labelled discriminatory or racist. This feeling of exclusion from certain areas of the city because of previous negative experiences had the result of making the housing searches of some participants more difficult and, in one case, ended the housing search altogether:

And I just want to add that now, this year, I've been driving from (city in Southern Ontario). And I've just been living with my family right now, [during my] undergrad. So right now, this year, I just moved in back, and I was like, okay, I'll just pull it out there. Because, because of all these bad experiences, I just didn't want to live in St. Catharines. So that's why I'm commuting. I - it takes me an hour, but it's just one of those things, it saves me a lot of other headaches. (P8, Pakistani, male, domestic)

For this participant, the racial discrimination that he experienced while living in the Niagara Region was enough to make him leave, not just one particular community within the region, but the region itself, in an attempt to avoid further negative experiences. As demonstrated by this example, experiencing racial discrimination in off-campus housing can have serious consequences for the housing searches of students. This is a dramatic example of an exclusionary geography that keeps students literally outside the region, as they commute to the university rather than living nearby in an attempt to avoid racial discrimination. These types of situations have implications, not only for students' experiences, but also for the region and university in terms of recruiting students to stay in Niagara.

While the discussion above has focused on racialized experiences of the housing market and local geographies, some referenced the impact of the whiteness of the region and university on housing options in more indirect ways. For example, some participants discussed how friendships and roommate options were structured by the whiteness of the university student body. The lack of racial diversity in certain academic programs, for example, was described by one racialized minority participant as shaping the racial composition of her friendships when she stated that, unlike in her hometown, where she had a diverse range of friends, at Brock "almost all of my friends are white" (P13, Nigerian (African), female, domestic).

Another racialized minority participant linked the small number of racialized minority students in her particular program more explicitly to the issue of housing when she commented on how this limited her ability to find potential roommates who shared her "descent":

I find that people who are white are in, like, the nor- the main race that's at the school. So they're in, usually in better programs. And I just, I just found it to be ... like, I wanted to live with people who were in the same program as me, but people who are of my descent are usually in random programs I find. I have, like, five close friends who are in [names program], who are the same thing as me. And I don't find them in the same kind of classes. So, that was an influence, 'cause I really wanted to be with someone in the

same classes. And, yeah, that influenced my off-campus housing in the Niagara Region.
(P9, Black (Trinidadian), female, domestic)

The friendships and acquaintances formed at university were described as structured by a dominant whiteness that in turn was linked to the issue of housing searches and experiences. The predominant whiteness of the university can therefore impact the social networks of students, and their choice of potential roommates.

The Influence of Racialized Identities on the Off-Campus Housing Search

During each interview, participants were asked whether they felt that their racialized identity influenced their housing search in any way. While the majority of participants stated that their housing search was impacted by their racialized identity, a few participants, including both white and racialized minority participants, stated that this had not been their experience, or were unsure as to whether their identity influenced their search. For example, one participant who identified herself as Caucasian stated that she was unsure if her racialized identity influenced her housing search, as the interactions with her eventual landlord took place online. Therefore, unless the landlord used her name to look her up online, this participant was unsure whether the landlord was even aware of her racialized identity before she moved in.

Some, like the following two participants, attributed any difficulties in their housing searches to other factors, such as location and the cost of rent, rather than their racialized identities:

Interviewer: Do you feel that your racialized identity influenced your housing search in any way? Why or why not?

P11: Mine didn't. Mine was ...

P10: I don't think mine did (laughs).

P11: ... based on location and the bus route. And the price. (Guyanese & Vincentian, Caribbean, female, domestic)

P10: Again, I don't know what Google does to filter everything. 'Cause again, there is that invisible filter bubble that surrounds you, and just the searches that you think that, that they think that you would like. Aside from that, I don't think that my race or anything discriminatory did anything to help me along. Again, it's more like, bus routes, and what would be more efficient, and what kind of community it is, like, is it nice. (Italian, female, domestic)

Participant 11 in the above conversation also stated in the interview that, "Personally, for me, I feel like I don't really experience racial discrimination. But that's something ... 'cause your study is what people have discr- like, noticed, and I feel like I'm just, like, wanted to let you know that maybe it's not for everyone" (P11, Guyanese & Vincentian, Caribbean, female, domestic). Interestingly, Participant 11, who stated that her racialized identity did not influence her housing search, stated elsewhere in the interview that conflicts with landlords could have been racially motivated, but that is not how she interpreted them. For example, when discussing a conflict with a particular landlord, this participant attributed this conflict primarily to her landlord's negative reaction to her attitude, not necessarily to her racialized identity:

P11: And definitely we had issues, and he didn't like me. And it – I'd say it was because of my attitude, but I, but it could be because of my race, and my attitude, together. Where he ...

P10: Like the stereotype? (Italian, female, domestic)

P11: Yeah. But I'm, ever- I think everyone's a human being, and if you're going to be rude to someone, don't expect them not to be rude back to you. And if they are, like, what did you expect? (Guyanese & Vincentian, Caribbean, female, domestic)

While Participant 11 suggested that her racialized identity was not the primary issue, but rather secondary to other factors in her experiences living in off-campus housing, her response may be indicative of a misunderstanding of the interview question, as both she and Participant 10 seemed to be discussing whether their racialized identities influenced their choice of which

accommodations to look into, rather than their interactions with potential landlords or their ability to actually secure said accommodations. It is also possible, however, to interpret the comments as being reflective of a dominant discourse positing that Canada is a post-racial, colour-blind society where racism is absent from people's lives. This dominant discourse may have allowed Participant 10 to leave white privilege unacknowledged, and may have made it more difficult for Participant 11 to raise or acknowledge the possibility that she may have experienced racial discrimination. In addition, this exchange raises issues about the racialized dynamics of interviews. For example, it is possible that, because myself and Participant 10 would likely be externally identified as white, Participant 11 chose to downplay or dismiss any suggestion of white racism for fear of offending myself and/or her friend.

Another participant stated that, in her experience, her racialized minority identity did not influence her housing search because, as she identified as mixed race, potential landlords or roommates may have perceived her as being more white than racialized minority:

For me, personally, I don't really think that my identity has ever influenced me to choose a different housing option. Because, I mean, I'm just as white as I am Black (laughs), so people often lump me in with white people. I don't know why, like, I'm both, but ... I don't know. I don't think it's really changed my search per se. (P4, Mixed black/white, female, domestic)

While this participant stated that her racialized identity did not influence her housing search, she distinguished her experiences from others, suggesting that she was able to "choose" her housing more freely. This became clearer when she later shared her knowledge of how others who were "fully Black" experienced racial discrimination:

Interviewer: Do you feel that your racialized identity influenced your housing search in any way? Why or why not?

Participant: Um ... me personally, no. But I know that it could potentially affect some, like, if I was fully Black. I know a lot of my friends experience a lot more racism than I do, just being mixed. But I know a lot of people would feel racial judgment against them

if they were more of a minority than myself. Like, yeah. And that's just in anything they do, not necessarily the housing market. (P4, Mixed black/white, female, domestic)

These comments suggest that she was aware of discrimination in the housing market linked to skin colour. This participant recognized that racism is a pervasive issue in the region, not only in off-campus housing, but in the community at large. While acknowledging the possibility that her "mixed" racialized identity privileged her during her housing search, she also raised the possibility that certain interactions with landlords during her experiences living in rental housing may have reflected racial discrimination. As she stated, "I'm not sure if I've actually experienced racism flat out, but things that landlords have done to me, it could have very well been racism, I don't know" (P4, Mixed black/white, female, domestic).

The above statement points to an issue repeatedly raised by participants in this study; namely, that instances of racial discrimination can be difficult to identify and prove. As will be discussed in the next chapter, participants sometimes discussed difficult experiences or altercations with landlords that were not explicitly racialized, but that they perceived to be possibly racist. While some participants described being unsure about whether what they experienced was racial discrimination, their stories, I argue, expose the pervasiveness of what Delgado & Stefancic (2012) refer to as the problematic "ordinariness" of racism in everyday life.

As previously mentioned, the majority of participants, including both white and racialized minority interviewees, stated that their racialized identity did have an influence on their housing search. Some perceived their racialized identities as making their housing searches easier, as was the case for two of the four white participants in this study. One white participant, for example, when asked whether she felt that her racialized identity influenced her housing search in any way, stated:

Yes I do. And I think it made it much easier for me to find housing. Because ... I'm a white person, and I have the privilege of not being racialized within searches like that. (P1, White, female, domestic)

In this statement, the participant recognized the white privilege that her identity provided, and that this privilege served to make her housing search easier. Another white participant discussed the benefits of white privilege in a more indirect manner, stating that, "Generally, I think I come across, like, landlords see me and they don't see, like, there would be an issue in the future with me" (P6, White, female, domestic), suggesting that landlords are able to visually identify those with whom there might be a future negative issue. This participant recognized elsewhere in the interview that her identity as a white person, and also as a female, may have served to make her housing search easier.

Some racialized minority participants, in contrast, felt that their racialized identities made their housing searches more difficult. As one racialized minority participant explained, racial discrimination might not be immediately apparent when speaking to potential landlords or roommates, but could become more apparent when a previously invisible racialized identity was made visible. As this participant stated:

Just like I mentioned earlier, I think that it would have influenced, definitely. Once they know your racial background, the behaviour is a little different than what you would expect. Everything seems fine over the phone, suddenly when you meet, then it's not the same. (P7, Indian, female, domestic)

This participant felt that knowledge about her racialized identity caused potential landlords to act in a discriminatory manner, complicating her housing search. Other racialized minority participants discussed feeling stereotyped by potential landlords and roommates, and being asked discriminatory questions relating to their racialized identities, something I discuss in more detail in the following chapter.

Although the majority of participants stated that their racialized identities influenced their housing searches, some of these same participants also mentioned that learning about the study and/or participating in the interview had made them think more deeply about racial discrimination in their housing experiences. For example, one participant explained that, before sitting down for the interview, she had not fully contemplated the possibility that some of her negative housing experiences might be the result of racial discrimination:

I can say it's something that not a lot of people think about, but when you're put in a situation you don't really think about it until you're literally put in a situation where you actually have to think about it. And it wasn't until I really sat down with you, and I really thought about, 'Oh my God, like, this is actually happening. Like, oh my God, maybe people aren't picking me because I'm Black, or maybe people aren't picking me 'cause of this.' Like it just, you never really think about those things. (P9, Black (Trinidadian), female, domestic)

Several other participants mentioned similar experiences, explaining that they had not fully considered the role of racial discrimination in their housing searches until they had seen the posters for the study or started discussing their experiences in the interview. These realizations can speak to the challenges and possible issues of guiding interviewees through their previous knowledge of the topic of this study. It could be argued that, because participants had been primed by their knowledge of the study and their access to the interview questions prior to the interview, they began to consider and/or present certain housing experiences as being racially discriminatory that they would not have otherwise. However, these comments can also be seen as a reflection of the previously mentioned "ordinariness" of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). As Solorzano and Yosso (2002) note, members of racialized minorities can also buy into and tell majoritarian stories that make white racial privilege seem commonplace and, "whether told by people of color or Whites, majoritarian stories are not often questioned because people do not see them as stories but as 'natural' parts of everyday life" (p. 28).

It is also clear that some participants felt uncomfortable with the possibility that racial discrimination may have played a role in difficult housing searches. One participant discussed her feelings about this possibility:

I think, I guess, in terms of my impression about that, is just that ... it's a really unfortunate situation. And I don't like being aware of how prevalent that is. Especially when ... I like being oblivious to the fact that I'm a different skin colour than other people. I don't like to have to think that, oh, it's because I'm African that I'm being treated differently, or I'm being neglected, like, the specific opportunities that someone else could get, and so that's frustrating. (P13, Nigerian (African), female, domestic)

Because experiences of racial discrimination can be painful to relive and recount, it is possible that some participants downplayed their experiences for their own wellbeing, or even chose not to share certain experiences because they were too distressing to think about or to share with a virtual stranger. As Tatum (1992) suggests in the U.S. context, in order to maintain a sense of psychological comfort, members of racialized minorities may also work to downplay the impact of racialized identities, and espouse instead more individualized meritocratic narratives.

While some of the participants suggested that they may not have been aware of racial discrimination while it was occurring during their housing searches, two racialized minority participants reflected on the ways in which their parents may have been more aware than they had been. One participant explained that he had not heard about racial housing discrimination being an issue before moving to the Niagara Region; however, it was possible that the excitement of moving to a new place to attend university may have overshadowed his parents' warnings about the potential for racial discrimination:

But, it's one of those things that, obviously, if parents, I guess parents are like that, they always tell you, okay, these kind of things go on. But you don't believe it, because you think, okay, you're, you know, you're just going to university. You're excited, and you don't think about those kind of things. (P8, Pakistani, male, domestic)

Another racialized minority participant described her experience of searching for housing with her parents, and the apparent differences in the areas of the region that they were attracted to. According to this participant, her parents were more attracted to looking for housing in what she called more “family oriented” communities that they considered safer and less threatening, while she was looking for areas that were populated primarily by students. For example, she stated that her parents were wary of heavily student-populated areas, as students “sometimes don’t know how to filter certain things” and there may be more potential for conflict (presumably due to racialized identities), whereas they seemed to assume that this conflict would be lesser in “family oriented,” quieter areas of the city. The participant described this difference as being due to the fact that her parents were more attuned to racial discrimination in the housing market. For instance, she described how after a viewing:

We’d get in the car and they would just voice their opinion right off the bat. They’d be like, “Oh, that person was totally being racist about something.” And I’d just be like, “Ooooh.” Like, I didn’t get that. (P13, Nigerian (African), female, domestic)

As this suggests, students may become aware throughout the process that the search for housing needs to include consideration of racial discrimination. These experiences of searching for housing with parents, in addition to a previous example in which one racialized minority participant’s mother had a strong reaction to hearing that certain areas in St. Catharines had a reputation of being racist, demonstrate parents’ efforts to protect their children from the impact of racism – in this case, in a racist housing market.

Students may also experience uncertainty about where to search for housing, and what areas would be safe for them to live in. For example, after becoming aware of the possibility that her racialized identity was affecting her housing search, this same participant felt unsure of where in the region to look for housing in order to avoid racial discrimination. As she stated:

When I was starting to click into some kind of, like, racial discriminations ... I wasn't sure how best to try and ... like, look for places that would be welcoming. Like, how do you, how do you be, like, oh, like, looking for – you know what I mean? Like, it's just, yeah. Like, how do you find – how do you try and find that? Like, it's not really a thing. (P13, Nigerian (African), female, domestic)

Perceived racial discrimination during the housing search can have potential consequences for students. For example, one racialized minority participant expressed that, when students feel discriminated against and experience difficulties while searching for housing, they may no longer want to live in the region at all.

Landlords and Housing Type

As can be seen in the above examples, participants experienced the majority of discrimination from their landlords. While I could not be sure of the racialized identities of the landlords mentioned by participants, as very few of the latter explicitly mentioned this detail, it seems reasonable to assume that most of them were white due to the wider racialized geography of the region. Some interviewees also acknowledged that discrimination was not necessarily a universal problem common to all landlords, but largely depended on the tendencies of individuals. Participants felt this to be true of the racial discrimination they experienced, but also felt that certain landlords would be more likely to discriminate against them based on other factors, such as their age or student identity. For example, one participant felt that landlords' attitudes toward student tenants may vary based on their previous experiences in dealing with this population:

Sometimes I think it depends on the previous experiences of the landlord, in terms of how they view Brock students as tenants. Um ... racialized identities, I think it could be – again, I think it's more to do with the landlord than with the tenants. (P7, Indian, female, domestic)

In addition to individual landlords possibly discriminating against students based on their previous experiences, this participant also recognized that racial discrimination towards tenants may be more of an issue amongst individual landlords. Two other participants, one racialized minority and one white, also shared this observation. These types of statements point to the understanding of racism as an individual problem, and not a systemic or societal issue that would be more difficult to address.

Perhaps because of this notion that discrimination is an issue of individual landlords, there was also a perception among participants that individual landlords who personally owned only one or two local properties would be more likely to discriminate against student tenants than those working for private housing companies (similar to Hogan and Berry's (2011) distinction between private and commercial landlords, as previously discussed). For example, one white participant thought that private companies would be less likely to racially discriminate against students, as they are more concerned about making a large profit than about who is living in the spaces they rent out:

I would definitely say, with the company, there would be way less discrimination. I think they're more out for the money. They want as many students as they can get, get as much money as they can. With the, the personal owners of buildings, which is what I've experienced mostly, I think, yeah, there's definitely more personal discrimination, depending, like I said, depending on the landlord. (P6, White, female, domestic)

While other participants also agreed that there would be less discrimination from private housing companies than individual landlords, one participant felt that there might not be a difference in discrimination between individual landlords and those working for private housing companies. As she explained, individuals work within these housing companies, and simply being employed with a private housing company may not deter them from acting in a discriminatory manner towards potential or current tenants:

And whether it's an individual person – again, I'm with [private housing company]. And, like, though that's a big company, you still have people under that, under the company that could discriminate. So it doesn't, I don't think it really matters whether it's a company or an individual landlord, I think that people are going to be discriminatory if they feel like it or not. It doesn't matter. (P10, Italian, female, domestic)

Whether or not they believed the degree of discrimination to be linked to different types of landlords, some participants agreed with the sentiment that landlords do not really care about their tenants, but just want to gain the most amount of money possible in their position. As one participant stated, “I feel like everyone just wants their room to be rented. And it's just a money thing” (P11, Guyanese & Vincentian, Caribbean, female, domestic). This speaks to the possible economic benefits of the off-campus student housing sector for both individual landlords and the Niagara Region as a whole, and landlords' apparent drive for economic profit, rather than concern for their tenants. As this discussion suggests, the student housing market in the Niagara Region is complex, with students having to navigate different types of landlords and lease agreements. My data points to this complexity, and raises questions for future research about the benefits and detriments of both individual and private landlords, and the possibilities of anti-racist education for all landlords to improve student experiences.

This chapter has discussed students' perceptions and observations of off-campus student housing in the Niagara Region. Several racialized minority participants viewed the Niagara Region and Brock University as exclusionary white spaces, discussing the implications of this racialized geography for their off-campus housing searches and experiences. They also generally believed that their racialized identities had an effect on their housing searches, either making searches easier (in the case of some white participants), or more difficult (in the case of several racialized minority participants). Finally, participants discussed their perception that individual landlords may be more discriminatory than those belonging to private housing

companies. Participants' perceptions illuminate the consequences of a racist housing market, as some students feel excluded and unwelcome in particular areas, and may not chose to live in their first choice of accommodations because of potential racial discrimination which can, in turn, impact their academic experiences.

Chapter 5

Experiences of Racial Discrimination in Off-Campus Housing

While participants had much to say about many different aspects of off-campus housing in the Niagara Region, as demonstrated in the previous chapters, they also described many examples of experiences of racial discrimination in this setting. In this chapter I, first, discuss the reported experiences of racial discrimination at each stage of the housing search, including the beginning stages, looking at listings, speaking to potential landlords and roommates, and going to view potential accommodations. Following this, I turn to participants' reported experiences of racial discrimination while living in off-campus housing.

Looking at Listings

For many students, off-campus housing searches begin online. Several students mentioned searching for housing in the Niagara Region online, using both popular classified advertisement websites (e.g. Kijiji) and the Brock University Off-Campus Living website (<https://brockocl.ca/>). The latter is managed by the Student Life and Community Experience office at the university, and is intended to assist students in accessing off-campus housing. The site includes listings posted by landlords and want ads posted by students looking for accommodations or roommates and/or advertising sublets. Three participants in this study mentioned the Brock Off-Campus Living website during interviews, either as a resource that they had used in their own housing searches, or as something useful for others. The international participant who had used the website during his own housing search described how it is especially useful for students moving from outside of the region, including international students.

The Off-Campus Living website can be a useful starting point for students looking for housing, as it can be accessed directly through the Brock University website. In addition to this resource, in 2015 the Brock University Graduate Students' Association also created a housing resource, which lists websites through which graduate students can search for housing, local bus routes, and questions to ask potential landlords (<https://www.brocku.ca/graduate-students-association/gsa-services/student-housing-resource>).

Once students have accessed local housing listings, they begin the process of deciding which ones to pursue. While in the process of reading through housing listings, several participants noted that some listings asked for a specific type of tenant. For example, one participant noted that she saw listings specifically requesting international students:

As I was looking for housing this year, there were, I came across a couple of ads that said "international students only." So ... I didn't come across a lot, but I did come across some that just want international students. (P11, Guyanese & Vincentian, Caribbean, female, domestic)

When considering why she thought landlords might be specifically requesting international students as tenants, the same participant speculated that:

It could be, just like, international students are more quiet and reserved, they don't party. If they don't know anybody, they're probably going to be more, like, reserved, opposed to people who've grown up in here, and know the culture. (P11, Guyanese & Vincentian, Caribbean, female, domestic)

This participant also stated that, "maybe they [international students] may know less about their rights, in terms of housing," and because of this, it may be easier for landlords to take advantage of these students (for example, making them pay extra fees or deposits). Obeng-Odoom's (2012), study of international student housing experiences in Australia found that these students were less familiar with the terms of real estate, making their searches more difficult. In addition, "the pressure of living in a new country coupled with a limited financial ability" meant that they

often had less time to search for housing, as they were “usually under pressure to settle quickly to begin their academic work” (2012, p. 208). Because of these constraints, it is possible that international students at Brock University may be attracted to housing that targets them specifically, as it may seem like the fastest way to find housing and begin getting settled in a new environment.

While only one participant commented on listings requesting international students only, multiple participants mentioned seeing or hearing about listings requesting tenants or roommates of a specific gender, and most mentioned seeing requests for female tenants. Connected to this, at least three participants mentioned that they felt that females had an advantage over males when searching for housing. One white, female participant, who described seeing ads for female tenants during her housing search, went further to briefly reference how gendered and racialized identities might intersect in ways that affected housing searches:

I just, personally I think that it would be harder for someone who is not a white female. Like, even white males would have a harder time finding off-campus living, I think. Because a lot of the time I’m looking on Kijiji and it says, no, only females, only females. And it’s, it’s weird to me. It’s like, males can be responsible too. I’ve lived in houses where there’s messy females everywhere. So it’s interesting that they specifically often want only females in certain houses. And it’s very gendered. I find a lot of houses are filled with just men and just women. (P6, White, female, domestic)

When asked why she thought roommates or landlords would request female tenants only, the same participant responded by saying, “Well the landlords wanting females, I think they have the idea that females are cleaner, more responsible, but that’s not always the case. Definitely not” (P6, White, female, domestic). For this participant, the desire for (white) female tenants is linked to the stereotypes that women are responsible and more likely to keep their living spaces clean, whereas men are the opposite, and therefore not desirable as tenants. As previously mentioned, several authors in both the United States and Europe have found that potential female

tenants receive more positive responses from landlords than male potential tenants (Ahmed and Hammarstedt, 2008; Andersson et al., 2012; Bengtsson et al., 2012; Feldman & Weseley, 2013). These studies did not focus on the listings themselves (instead looking at landlords' responses to inquiries), but they support the suggestion of landlord preference for female tenants made by some of the participants in this study.

While women may have an advantage in off-campus housing searches in the Niagara Region, as already suggested, racialized identity and gender can intersect to make the housing search more difficult for some women than others. One participant in particular recounted his sister's experience of searching for off-campus housing in the Niagara Region, mentioning that she had a difficult time finding housing because of her cultural preference for female roommates:

Participant: And from racial perspective, I think it just makes it a little harder for, I think certain group of people. Especially 'cause my sister was, she was a Muslim girl, I mean, she is a Muslim girl. (All laugh.) So I was even talking to her the other day, and she was telling me about how it's harder for her to find a house. Because in our culture, it's like, it's preferred that you would have a house, you would live with girls, rather than guys. So most of the houses she visited, they said, "Okay, no, we can't even, the guys can live in the house as well." And that was kind of a problem for her. And especially, it became a problem because, in the beginning, all the rooms aren't booked. So it's like, she takes one room, then the landlord's like, "Okay, if a guy comes in, then I have to give him the room." So there was no guarantee there. So it was really hard for her to find a place where there's a guarantee that, okay, the landlord's only going to be bringing in the girls into the house.

I: Right. So there's kind of a gendered aspect to it as well.

Participant: Exactly, and that made it really hard for her to find a suitable place, where she could find a, also a place, like I said, that's going to be good for her academically, and obviously transport-wise, where she has to take the bus and come to Brock. So, I think it just makes it more difficult. It made it more difficult for her especially. (P8, Pakistani, male, domestic)

The portrayal of this issue as culturally specific seems counter to the observations of other participants that most houses are in fact gender segregated. This example points to the

intersectional nature of the housing search, in that multiple social identities of race, religion, and gender, in this case, interacted to make the housing search more difficult. As this example also revealed, there can be an added layer in housing searches, given that much of the housing available to students in the region consists of shared houses with multiple roommates. While sharing a house with others may help lower the cost of each person's rent, accessing such housing may involve navigating difficulties with potential roommates as well as landlords.

As demonstrated by these examples, the first stage of the housing search, which involves accessing and sorting through housing listings, can already present opportunities for exclusion, in that certain listings request a specific type of tenant. However, the difficulties that participants faced often seemed to come not necessarily in these initial searches of housing listings online, but with the next stages of the housing search. Speaking about her experience of searching for housing in Niagara from a city outside the Niagara Region, one participant stated that, "I found it was easy to look for a place, but hard to actually get one" (P5, Aboriginal, female, domestic). She explained further in the interview that it was not difficult to search for the listings on various websites, but when it came to actually travelling to the region to meet with landlords and secure a place, the process became much more difficult, a view that was supported by other participants. The following sections discuss participants' experiences of racial discrimination both in their initial interactions with potential landlords or roommates and while living in off-campus housing.

Navigating Racial Discrimination in Initial Encounters

Questions asked

After students have sorted through housing listings and found some that look promising, the next step in the housing search is to contact potential landlords (or roommates/fellow students, in a subletting situation) to inquire about the listing and potentially set up a viewing. Several participants commented on their initial experiences of speaking to potential landlords. Specifically, five participants described situations where they were asked racist or discriminatory questions in this context. For example, one white participant described her experience of being directly asked about her racialized identity during a phone conversation with a potential landlord, and her reaction to that question:

Participant: So I was asked over the phone, I was calling about a place, it was a boarding situation, so I would be living in a room in someone's house. I was asked over the phone, quote, "What are you?" And I didn't know what he meant. So I said, "I'm sorry, what do you mean?" And he said, like, "What are you, like Black, white, yellow?" That's what he said. Which is really offensive and, I know you said not using offensive language but that's what he said. And at that point, I was so desperate to find a place that I actually ended up going and seeing this place anyways, because I was in a position where that wouldn't affect me personally, because I wouldn't be racially discriminated against.

...

Interviewer: And did you answer the question? When he asked?

Participant: I did, actually, yeah. I was so jarred, I answered the question. I was like, "But I'm not sure it matters," is what I said. But I, the whole thing was really weird. And I'm not sure what would have happened if I had refused to answer, or if I had answered it a different way. I wonder if he would have just said, "Don't bother coming." But, that's speculation. (P1, White, female, domestic)

As indicated in this example, this participant felt that her being offered a viewing of this apartment may have been conditional on her answer to the question about her racialized identity. While her answer allowed her access to this viewing, it is possible that, had she answered differently, this particular landlord would not have offered to set up a viewing of the apartment. This example also demonstrates how white individuals can be complicit in reproducing racism

while searching for housing. Because of the difficulties this participant had already faced at this point in her search, she took advantage of her white privilege in this situation in the hopes of finding accommodations.

Other participants were also asked about their racial backgrounds during their housing searches. One racialized minority participant described an interaction with the daughter of the landlord in the basement apartment where he eventually signed a lease agreement, in which he was asked about his racial background:

She asked, started asking me questions like, you know, “Where are you raised from? Are you raised in a good family?” And I was like, why does this all matter? And at the ending she kind of finished off with like ... I think she was a little racist. And she was like, ‘cause ... ‘cause there’s some groups, and I don’t want to name the ones she told me, ‘cause that’s not right, so she told me there’s some groups of people, some race of people that are very disrespectful. And I said, uh, okay, but I was ... I’m not, I’m pretty sure what you’re trying to say is wrong. And I’m not disrespectful to anybody. (P2, Desi (Pakistani), male, domestic)

In this case, the participant’s answer did not prevent him from securing the apartment. However, the fact that his landlord’s daughter asked about his racialized identity suggests that, had he indicated that he was a member of one of the “disrespectful groups of people,” the outcome may have been different. In addition, this racialized minority participant’s account suggests that he attempted to challenge his landlord’s discriminatory comments, unlike the white participant quoted previously.

While the two examples provided above involved participants being asked about their racialized identity quite blatantly, other participants were asked more subtle questions when speaking to potential landlords. For example, one racialized minority participant was asked if there would be a “cooking smell” and if she would have a lot of family members visiting. Describing her response to these questions, this participant explained that, “When I said yeah, that I occasionally have families visiting on the weekends, I didn’t get that room. And I assume

that that was because of what I had said” (P7, Indian, female, domestic). As seen again in this example, this participant assumed that her answer to the questions posed by the potential landlord determined whether or not she was able to successfully rent the room. This can be seen clearly in her reflection on this experience, when she stated that, “It was my first experience, I - maybe I should have said no” (P7, Indian, female, domestic).

Another racialized minority participant speculated that answering questions about which academic program she would be undertaking may have caused potential landlords to not respond or rent their accommodations to her, something she had not considered before the interview. As she explained, attending a program centred on Indigenous issues may have led potential landlords to suspect that she was herself Aboriginal, and made them hesitant to rent to her:

I think that would, that would explain a couple of questions that you’re asking about. What it is that, why you think they didn’t get back to me. Like, maybe that was my downfall of saying I’m in, going into the [program centred on Indigenous issues], you know. So, I don’t know if, if that poses a problem. (P5, Aboriginal, female, domestic)

In the previous two examples, both participants note that their answers to questions posed by potential landlords may have been the cause of some of the difficulties they experienced in their housing searches.

Non-responses

While it is relatively easy for those seeking rental housing to contact potential landlords or roommates, a response is not always guaranteed. Two participants explicitly mentioned not receiving responses to phone calls, emails, or text messages from potential landlords or roommates at this stage in the process of searching for housing. One racialized minority participant described a recent experience of attempting to find new accommodations with a friend, and the difficulties she was experiencing while attempting to contact potential

roommates. As she explained, her friend, who she described as Italian, had more success with getting responses from these potential roommates, while the participant had no responses:

Participant: I've messaged a couple people and no one's gotten back to me, it shows that the message has been read. But when my friend, she's Italian, when she messages them, they reply to her. So, I'm not sure if that's anything, but, yeah. So, I can tell you it's a little difficult sometimes, yeah.

Interviewer: And what do you think the difference would be in you messaging someone versus your friend messaging someone?

Participant: I – maybe it's my Facebook profile? I mean, it's just pictures of me, maybe people d- Yeah, I don't know, to be honest. We both say the same message, the exact same message. Hey we found you on a Kijiji ad. You're looking for a roommate, we're – me and this other girl are looking to live with someone, and we're wondering if you want to meet up? Maybe we can have coffee and, like, get to know each other. We say the same kind of message, but, yeah. No one's gotten back to me, but I just don't know why. I'm con- I'm actually concerned to know why, to be honest. (P9, Black (Trinidadian), female, domestic)

This type of direct comparison with white friends can make the differences in responses clearer to racialized minority students. This example also identifies the possible significance and increased importance of students' online presence, as potential landlords and roommates can easily research potential tenants online. A lack of response from a potential landlord or roommate can be perceived as exclusionary housing discrimination, especially if the landlord or roommate has knowledge of the racialized identity of the potential tenant. This can also be related to Hogan and Berry's (2011) concept of "opportunity denying" housing discrimination, in which landlords respond to the inquiries of some potential tenants but not others.

However, as Feldman and Weseley (2013) note, as does the participant, it is not possible to know for certain why a landlord or roommate does not respond. As they explain, "A nonresponse on the part of a landlord could be a result of many things other than racial/ethnic prejudice. For instance, the apartment might no longer be available, or the prospective tenant's

query could have come at an inconvenient time.” (Feldman & Weseley, 2013, p. E424).

Regardless of the “real” reasons, non-responses, as this interviewee made clear, create anxiety and concern in racialized minority students who are left uncertain as to whether they are experiencing racial discrimination as they are denied the opportunity to meet with a potential landlord or roommate or view accommodations.

Over the phone interactions

Several participants commented that it would be difficult for potential landlords to racially discriminate over the phone, as it would not be easy for potential landlords to decipher the racialized identity of a potential tenant simply based on their voice. For example, one racialized minority participant, when pondering her own experiences of poor communication with potential landlords, noted that she did not think this lack of communication would have been because of her racialized identity, as the landlord would not have known her identity simply through a phone conversation:

So, I’m not sure if ... (laughs) I’m sure you can’t hear through the phone that you’re ... you’re Native, or if you’re Aboriginal, or if you’re of different, from a different country, or from a different place, or, I don’t know if that ... that you can actually hear on the phone. So, it was just, I just found that very odd for some of the landlords to just not get back to you. (P5, Aboriginal, female, domestic)

There seems to be an assumption in these types of statements that racial housing discrimination can only take place in person, or through photos posted online that are easily linked to the potential tenant’s racialized identity. As one participant stated, “I think, because most people are looking for houses by a phone, or email, it’s really hard to discriminate by race” (P11, Guyanese & Vincentian, Caribbean, female, domestic).

As the phone and email-based audit studies previously reviewed demonstrate, however, discrimination can, in fact, take place before any face-to-face interaction between prospective tenants and landlords or roommates. In terms of discrimination simply on the basis of a person's voice, as Massey and Lundy (2001) point out, "Research shows that Americans are capable of making fairly accurate racial attributions on the basis of linguistic cues alone" (p. 454). One racialized minority participant did recognize this phenomenon to some extent. He described how his parents would sometimes phone potential landlords on his behalf, and that their accents may have prompted these landlords to want to meet them in person before finalizing living arrangements:

So you try to call people, and then you try to ask [for] information, and most of them – especially in my first year because it's like, we're not familiar - sometimes parents call on behalf of you. And then, sometimes they have a little bit of accent, or different way of talking. And then that's why, I think, most of the times the landlord would be like, they would say, "I want, I would like you guys to come down." (P8, Pakistani, male, domestic)

Massey and Lundy, in their study of phone-based racial discrimination in the United States, found:

clear and often dramatic evidence of phone-based racial discrimination. Compared with whites, African-Americans were less likely to get through and speak to a rental agent, less likely to be told of a unit's availability, more likely to pay application fees, and more likely to have creditworthiness mentioned as a potential problem in qualifying for a lease. (Massey & Lundy, 2001, p. 466)

As Massey and Lundy demonstrate, it is quite possible for potential landlords or roommates to engage in racial discrimination over the phone, or act based on assumptions made about an individual based on their voice.

The significance of names

While landlords may judge potential tenants over the phone, it is also possible that exclusionary discrimination can take place based on a student's name alone. As online housing listings are becoming increasingly popular, several participants mentioned making contact with potential landlords or roommates over the internet. As Feldman and Weseley (2013) note, making contact over the internet provides a certain amount of anonymity for potential tenants. As they explain, "In the context of the housing market, the Internet provides a way for potential tenants to contact landlords without the landlords knowing their race. However, a tenant's name may still lead to discrimination in the Internet housing market" (Feldman & Weseley, 2013, p. E417). As previously discussed, much of the research regarding racial housing discrimination takes the form of email-based studies. Using this type of study, evidence has been found of discrimination against those with Arabic sounding names in Sweden and Norway (Andersson et al., 2012; Bengtsson et al., 2012; Carlsson & Eriksson, 2014), Hispanic and African American names in the United States (Feldman and Weseley, 2013), and Muslim/Arabic, African-American/Black, and East/Southeast Asian names in Canada (Hogan and Berry, 2011). These studies demonstrate that name-based housing discrimination is a widespread form of exclusionary housing discrimination.

One racialized minority participant described her experience of living in a local private housing company's student housing complex. Each suite in this complex accommodates four people, and applicants can apply individually or with a group of four to fill the suite. The process of applying to live in this complex as an individual student involves filling out an application form that is then made available to students already living in suites who are looking for a roommate. The participant explained that one of the options on the application form was to

indicate the racialized identity of the applicant, which this participant chose to do. In this case, the participant's name, in addition to indicating her racialized identity on the application form, were reasons why she believes she was probably not chosen as a roommate in a suite, and had to independently find three other roommates to move in with. The participant described her experience of applying in this fashion, and not being chosen by any of the students who were currently living in the complex and seeking individual roommates.

And maybe, also, it could have been my name (laughs). But ... no, my name has, like, it can definitely tell that I'm Black. So, it might have also pinpointed people that maybe I'd- I, who they want to be with. And, you know, some people, most people want to be with people who are like them. Just like I wanted to live with people who were like me as well. (P9, Black (Trinidadian), female, domestic)

This participant's observation that her name may have indicated her racialized identity points to the potential name-based discrimination that can take place when searching for housing. This example also points to discrimination that can take place between students, as landlords were not involved in this interaction.

Another participant also commented on the fact that her name may have indicated her white racialized identity. When asked whether she thought her racialized identity influenced her housing search in any way, one white participant commented that, because all correspondence was done online, the only indicator of her racialized identity would have been her name, unless the landlord took steps to research her further:

Mine was all done on the computer, so, unless they would have looked me up, say on Facebook, they wouldn't have known. Or, judged by my first and last name. So, they may have not known, but, I don't know that because I can't get into their head. (P3, Caucasian, female, domestic)

According to Feldman & Weseley (2013), "First names can create assumptions about a person's race, gender, and even age", while last names can provide clues as to a person's ethnic background or religious affiliation (p. E416). Discrimination on the basis of one's name presents

a serious problem, as potential landlords will certainly have access to a tenant's name before the lease agreement is finalized.

Viewing or Finalizing Accommodations

The next stage of the housing search that participants discussed was going to view potential living spaces, after being in contact with potential landlords to set up a viewing. At this stage in the process, several participants described experiences of exclusionary and opportunity denying housing discrimination. Roscigno et al. (2009) note that exclusionary housing discrimination can take the form of "the false denial or representation of apartments or homes actually available for rent or sale" and "lying about apartment availability" (p. 57). In keeping with these observations, three participants in this study reported going to view an apartment or room, only to be told, when they expressed interest in renting the space, that the apartment or room had already been rented. For example, one racialized minority participant described her experience of telling a landlord immediately after a viewing that she wanted to rent the room, only to be told that it was already rented to someone else:

Participant: I remember looking at a house, and he was showing me this house, the landlord. And I was like, cool, yeah, I think I want this place. And he was just like, "Oh, um" ... (sighs) He's like, "The room's already taken." And I'm like, then why show me it? And it wasn't even one of those things where, like, a couple weeks later I, like – it was, again, right away. I was just like, okay, we're quick to decide people, we want this place. And he just told me – again, it was just another b.s. excuse. And I'm like, yeah, these excuses don't make sense, people. Either say no right off the bat, and say what's up, but I just felt like I was jerked around so much, and, that was just, like ...

Interviewer: And that was in person?

Participant: Yeah. That was, yeah. I was just like, oh my gosh, like, I'm getting so angry at these people. Like, yeah. 'Cause ... I remember that first year, just crying at the end of it. 'Cause I'm just like, this shouldn't be this hard. It should not be this hard to find a place to live. (P13, Nigerian (African), female, domestic)

This participant's frustration with the experience, both at the time that it happened and during this retelling, is evident, and is demonstrative of the effects of racial housing discrimination on students. While it may be possible that the room had, in fact, been rented to someone else, this participant, and other participants reporting similar incidents, were suspicious as to whether this was actually the case, or whether the landlord was using it as an excuse to not rent them the apartment or room.

Another racialized minority participant described having a similar experience of being told that an apartment had already been rented immediately after a viewing. He and his father had talked to the landlord over the phone, and had arranged to come and view the apartment, which was a basement suite in the landlord's home. They eventually came and viewed the apartment, asking questions about the space, etc. After the viewing, the landlord had told them that he had already rented the apartment to someone else. When asked why he would still show them the suite, the landlord had replied that they had made the trip down to the region, so he thought he might as well show them the space. The participant explained that he was curious about the incident, so he had a friend call the landlord to inquire about the same apartment, only to hear that it was still available:

And then, it was one of those things, then I was like, you know, in that age you really want to know, what's going on? So then you, there's not much going on, so you're like, let's find out. So then I had my friend call the same place and ask, and the room was available. So it was kind of one of those things that I was like, I don't know why the guy did it, but I guess that happened. (P8, Pakistani, male, domestic)

This participant followed through with this experience in a way that other participants in this study did not, and thus was able to confirm that the apartment was, in fact, still available for others to rent.

A similar account was documented in Feagin and Sikes (1994, as cited in Massey & Lundy, 2001), in which a Black woman was told that an apartment she had called to inquire about had already been rented. When she asked her friend to call and inquire about the same apartment because they sounded “like a white person,” the friend was told that the apartment was still available (Massey & Lundy, 2001, p. 455). These types of incidents are clear examples of exclusionary housing discrimination, as racialized minority potential tenants are rejected in favour of others.

Similar to these experiences, two participants discussed having made verbal agreements with landlords to rent accommodations, only to be told soon after that they had been rented to someone else. One racialized minority participant described meeting the landlord and current tenants of a house (who would become her roommates should she move in), and making a verbal agreement with the landlord, only to find out soon after that the room had been rented:

Participant: So, I was just like, wow, ‘cause I was ready to go back, go get packed, and, I said, “Okay I’m coming to pay the rent.” So ... and I had to wait for the rent to come in. Right, so I told them, “I’ll come and pay the rent,” we shook hands, they said, “Look forward to seeing you.” And so I phoned them up, and ... it was already rented to another person.

Interviewer: Wow. So you basically had an agreement already, like a verbal agreement.

Participant: A verbal agreement. We shook hands. I met the, the people that were actually already there, and they seemed excited. We got along, like, talking-wise. And then, I just like, I was like, wow. What just happened? (P5, Aboriginal, female, domestic)

While this participant’s situation was not officially finalized, partially because she had not yet put a down payment on the rent, another racialized minority participant actually paid her first month’s rent after meeting the landlord and viewing an apartment, only to have the money returned to her because the landlord had rented the room to a different tenant. When she asked

for an explanation, the landlords told her that someone else had already paid, despite the fact that the participant had paid as well:

And their answer, or their response to like, when I asked them, “I don’t get it, why do I not have the place anymore,” was that someone else had already paid. And I’m like, but I did too, like, I don’t understand. (P13, Nigerian (African), female, domestic)

Another experience that two participants discussed was landlords not responding when they attempted to contact them after a viewing of accommodations. The same racialized minority participant quoted above described phoning a landlord within half an hour of a viewing to tell them that she wanted to rent the accommodations, but did not receive a response.

There was someone who I was like, “Okay, cool, we want the place.” But *I* didn’t want the place, whereas my parents really wanted it. ‘Cause I remember getting a really horrible vibe from the person, and just feeling like I wasn’t accepted. And I immediately thought, like, my skin colour, this has to be it. It’s one of my physical attributes, as opposed to all the other information that – like, he had no information about me at all. So it’s just like, ‘kay, I feel really uncomfortable. And so I was really against it. And I remember saying like, “Hey, okay, like, sure, we want the place,” type of thing, and they just didn’t respond. Like ... didn’t – and we, I think we contacted them maybe twenty minutes after we saw the place, not even like we waited a week or something, or a couple days, and they thought, “No, we sold the place already, like, I’m just going to ignore the call.” No, it was just, like, twenty minutes later. (P13, Nigerian (African), female, domestic)

The participant noted that she never heard from this person again, despite attempting to contact them in order to rent the space.

Living in Off-Campus Housing

While experiences of discrimination during the housing search constitutes a great deal of the data presented here, this study also goes beyond the majority of the work on housing discrimination to consider discrimination in the accommodation setting itself. This is an

important contribution, and suggests the need for more research that goes beyond the housing search itself.

Several participants described experiences of living in rental housing in the Niagara Region that they considered to be racially discriminatory. The majority of instances of discrimination described by participants involved perceived discrimination by landlords. Some of these experiences had to do with the differential treatment that participants experienced when compared to their roommates or other tenants with the same landlord. For example, one racialized minority participant described an instance where her landlord would not fix the sink in her kitchen but, after talking to other tenants with the same landlord, learned that none of them had had similar experiences:

Once there was a sink, the kitchen sink that was leaking, and water would just collect inside, in the cabinet underneath, and he just wouldn't fix it. He said, "Put a container, and let the water collect in a container, and then just empty it periodically." And so that's what we did for a few months, but he did not fix it. And ... you know, I think that, that was not the issue that other people experienced. 'Cause he rents four houses consecutively, like, in a row. And speaking with other people in the other houses, no one else had had similar experiences. So, I mean, it's something that I've had to deal with, and it took him, pretty much a semester to fix it. And he eventually ended up moving us to a different room, but he didn't fix the sink. So we had to just move houses. That – we as in my sister and I. We live in the same house, so, yeah. That was another experience. (P7, Indian, female, domestic)

This participant's experience can be seen as a form of nonexclusionary housing discrimination which, as previously mentioned, is characterized by discrimination that takes place within "already established and existing housing arrangements" (Roscigno et al., 2009, p. 49). As Roscigno et al. note, this type of housing discrimination involves "unfair or differential terms, treatment, and conditions" which can include the intentional neglect of maintenance of the property (2009, p. 62), similar to what this participant reported.

Another racialized minority participant had several examples of his landlord treating him differently than his roommates. While these roommates were not explicitly racialized as white by the participant, the context pointed to this conclusion for me as the researcher. After what the participant described as being actively dissuaded from taking up the tenancy in the first place (by the landlord), he was then charged fees that his roommates did not have to pay, and that he did not get back:

Participant: But then he's [the landlord] like, "But one thing you have to do, you have to pay the security deposit." Which nobody else – I hear people have to pay sometimes, but nobody else in the house had to pay the security deposit. I was the only one who had to pay. So then, it was one of those things, he's like, "Don't worry, you'll get it back, but I just, just ... can you just pay the security deposit." So then I was the only one in the house who had to pay the security deposit.

...

Interviewer: And did you ever end up getting your deposit back, your security deposit?

Participant: I actually didn't get it back. Because at the end he said, his reason was, he said, like, "Well, there's some things in the house that, that are not clean, and not ..." and stuff. And I was like, okay, that's how I came in. That's how they are. He was like, "No." But then I was like, why didn't you take it from other students who are living there? He was like, he was like, yeah he did. But then that was just word of his mouth. (P8, Pakistani, male, domestic)

This example can also be seen as a form of nonexclusionary housing discrimination, as this racialized minority participant was subjected to differential treatment in the form fees that his housemates did not have to pay.

This same participant had other incidents with this landlord. He described an ongoing problem in which his landlord would come into his room when he was not at home, an act which violated his lease agreement:

And then what happened was, over time, every one, one or two weeks, he would be coming into the house, and when I was not home, he would be opening my door and checking my room out. And this, this kind of got really serious, this happened last year, was, I would see sometimes that things would be a little moved around. So then I would

just ask the other roommates, I would be like, hey, did the landlord come in today? And then they would be like, “Yeah, yeah, he came in, and he was just checking around.” And I was like, “Does he come open my room?” He was like, “Yeah, he does it,” I was like, just like, they were like, “He doesn’t take anything.” I was like, “Yeah but, does he open my room?” And they were like, “Yeah, he does open your room.” So then I found out from that. (P8, Pakistani, male, domestic)

Although this participant eventually confronted his landlord, who agreed not to enter his room without giving him advance notice, the participant was still unsure as to whether or not the landlord kept his word, as he would often come to the house when the participant was not home. This example also hints at a possible complicity or alliance between landlords and students, possibly along racial lines, as the participant’s roommates seem to be defending the landlord’s actions by stating that “he doesn’t take anything.” This possible alliance may have allowed for racial discrimination to be reproduced or go unchallenged by the participant’s roommates.

Some racialized minority participants took issue with the way their landlords spoke to them or their roommates. For example, one racialized minority participant described how her landlord made what she considered to be racist comments about her roommate’s appearance. As she explained, “She’s an immigrant, an international student. And he [the landlord] said, ‘What’s wrong with your hair?’ ‘Cause her hair is just really, really curled up. And, it was just weird. You know, sometimes he’ll comment on her clothes, sometimes on her hair” (P7, Indian, female, domestic). Another racialized minority participant described a previous housing situation in which she and her racialized minority housemates felt that their landlord was rude to them and their family members, while their white housemates did not experience similar treatment:

Or, just the way that he would talk to me. ‘Cause second semester we got, kind of a switch of new tenants or whatever. And one of the tenants, she was Spanish. And she told me the same thing, that he would talk really rudely to her mother. And I’m like, “Yeah, he talks really rudely to my mother as well.” And there was another person who

was, she was a co-op student. She was Indian, and she came second semester as well. And she was, like, “Yeah, he talks really rudely to me,” type of thing. Whereas no one else had ever mentioned it besides the only three people who were, like, racially different. So I was like ... that’s not okay. The fact that he felt almost like he was allowed to talk down to us. Whether it’s because we were students, or because of, like, our backgrounds, regardless, it wasn’t cool. (P13, Nigerian (African), female, domestic)

This participant felt that the landlord may have treated her and her racialized minority housemates rudely because of their racialized identities. However, the two above examples indicate that even when students recognize that racial discrimination is taking place, they may do little about it, or feel unable to address it directly. Once again, the above experiences described by participants indicate the complexity of identifying racial discrimination. While few of the above experiences are explicitly linked to the racialized identities of participants, participants perceived these experiences to be instances of racial discrimination, and they were all mentioned in the context of a discussion of racial discrimination in off-campus housing.

One racialized minority participant provided several examples of how the religion and cultural expectations of some student tenants, particularly Muslim students, created tensions between the student and their landlord. He described how, when his sister was living in the region to attend Brock University, her landlord saw her praying in her room. After she saw this, the landlord and their daughter avoided interacting with the participant’s sister:

One time, she was, I would say, she was praying in her room. So the landlord would, I think, it was in the - she was praying in a way that the room, the door was right in front of her. So the landlord would open the door, and then they saw, they saw her praying. So then - they had a daughter, so she would come down often talk to my sister, and then after that day she would not, she didn’t come down even once. And every time my parents would come over, she would try to avoid everybody, and she would, she would kind of, like, segregate herself from my sister, because she thought that she would have influence on her daughter. (P8, Pakistani, male, domestic)

In another example from this same participant, he described how one of his Muslim friends had been clear with her male landlord about dressing appropriately and giving advance

notice before he entered her apartment, because of cultural and religious expectations of appropriate interactions between males and females. However, according to the participant, this landlord intentionally entered her apartment in clothing that he knew was inappropriate, in order to make the tenant uncomfortable:

So, what the problem was, the guy would kind of, I would say, she told him on, several times, even her parents told the landlord that this is kind of a behaviour that we don't tolerate. And, and it was cleared at the beginning. But the guy would kind of harass her, and then he would wear tank tops, short shorts, and just would walk into her room. And then be like, "Hey, how's it going? Things are going well? How's your internet working?" So then, it was one of those things, it was getting, it was one of those things, it was like ... it was done on purpose. You could tell that these kind of things are done on purpose. So she was having a lot of problems with that. So, I, it's - this is one of those things that you're like, okay, I don't know, is the person doing it on purpose? But then, she made it clear, she clarified it over and over again, but it just wouldn't get resolved, so ... I think she was also facing that kind of, I would say ... and also, it's one of those things that, she had to pay the rent in advance for the semester. So then she couldn't leave the place. So then she was kind of stuck there. (P8, Pakistani, male, domestic)

These examples demonstrate how discrimination based on intersecting racialized, gendered religious, and cultural identities can create significant difficulties for student tenants. They can also be seen as possible examples of Islamophobia, which can be defined as "indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotions directed at Islam or Muslims" (Bleich, 2011). Islamophobia is a form of racism (Henry & Tator, 2010) and, as Meer (2014) notes, "hostility towards Islam is used to justify discriminatory practices towards Muslims" (p. 70).

Denials of Racial Discrimination

As is apparent in the above examples, much of the discrimination discussed by participants was perpetrated by landlords. Roscigno et al. (2009), in their study of racial housing discrimination in the United States, also found that landlords and owners of housing units were the primary perpetrators of both exclusionary and non-exclusionary housing discrimination, due

to their generally close proximity to their tenants and the power that they hold in the landlord-tenant relationship.

While landlords were perceived by participants to be discriminatory, engaging in both racial discrimination and other discriminatory practices, there was a tendency to view their fellow students, who were possible roommates, as more respectful and less discriminatory.

When comparing students and landlords, for example, one racialized minority participant stated:

And I think most students understand, you know, in terms of tolerance and respect. And I'd like to believe that most students understand. I'm not sure why the landlords don't, but yeah. (P7, Indian, female, domestic)

For this participant, there was a clear distinction between students and landlords: she expected students to be more racially tolerant than landlords, who she experienced as racially disrespectful.

Of course, students may not always be as tolerant as some participants expected, as the previously discussed example of one racialized minority participant not being chosen as a roommate by her peers illustrates. For some, what they saw as the greater racial tolerance of students was related to university student status, with the assumption being that university students are more open-minded or enlightened than the general public, and therefore less likely to racially discriminate. One student, for example, suggested that racial discrimination would be less likely to occur in on-campus student housing run by the university because of students' common understanding that discrimination is wrong:

So, when it comes to Brock University on-campus living, I don't think it's – again, it could be there. I'm not saying that it isn't. But definitely I think it would be less on-campus than it would be off-campus. 'Cause again, you have more people, more different opinions on race, and gender, and a lot of things outside of the school. So I think it would be less at Brock University. (P7, Italian, female, domestic)

This participant went on to say that, while students may have preferences as to the gender of their housemates or roommates, “I think that’s the most discrimination you’re going to get from students” (P7, Italian, female, domestic). This participant believed that members of the university community held different views than the wider society, in that those involved in the university culture share an understanding that racial discrimination is wrong and would therefore be less likely to engage in that type of behaviour.

When discussing racial discrimination, it seemed to also be taken for granted by some participants that discrimination would not be an issue at this point in history due to generational and broader societal changes. For example, one white participant stated that, “I don’t know in 2015, if it would be such a big issue if you have multicultural housing” (P14, White, male, domestic). While he acknowledged that racial discrimination may be found amongst some individuals, society, he felt, had progressed past racial discrimination. Some participants, like the one above, cited the year itself or this time in history as self-evident of progress with regard to racial discrimination. Another participant supported the notion, stating:

I don’t think that’s really a big issue among students. When it comes to this day and age, a lot of people are more accepting of race than they did years ago. (P10, Italian, female, domestic)

The view that students were less likely to discriminate due to generational differences was echoed by one racialized minority participant, who explained:

But I do think that because our gener- like, as a generation goes on, the older generations are the ones that are more discriminative towards race, ‘cause that’s how they were brought up. Opposed to the new generation that’s growing up now and, in a society where, you know, we’re having more interracial couples that will, in turn, have more interracial babies. Which then, they’re not going to be, like, discriminative, because, you know, they’re both. So I think that it’s mostly the older generation that’s keeping the racial discrimination. So I think it’s going to get better. (P11, Guyanese & Vincentian, Caribbean, female, domestic)

These types of sentiments serve to support and reinforce what DiAngelo and Sensoy (2014) refer to as an “ideal imagined community” that is allegedly post-racial and where individuals are not defined or restricted by any aspect of their identity. One feature of this ideal imagined community is the assumed progress that has been made between the racist past and a posited tolerant, multicultural, and inclusive present. Once again, however, this masks the continued existence of systemic white privilege and power. It is possible that a belief in this ideal imagined community impacted the ways in which some participants recognized, or were willing to articulate, racial discrimination in their off-campus housing experiences. As demonstrated, participants provided several reasons why students may be less likely to engage in racial discrimination than landlords, while reinforcing the notion that landlords are the main perpetrators of racial discrimination in off-campus housing.

While the racist actions of landlords require critical attention, it is important that they not be portrayed as aberrant “bad apples” in ways that deny the ongoing issues of racism between students, as well as at universities more generally. This study, for example, has included an account of a racialized minority participant not being chosen as a roommate by her peers, and I have discussed the broader realities of blackface at Brock University as well as studies of racism at universities (e.g. Bailey, 2015; Clark et al., 2014; Henry & Tator, 2009; Houshmand et al., 2014).

This chapter described participants’ experiences of racial discrimination in off-campus housing in the Niagara Region. These experiences occurred at various stages of the housing search process, including looking through housing listings and initial interactions with potential landlords and roommates (which included not receiving responses to inquiries about accommodations, and patterns that raised issues of online and phone based discrimination based

on names and/or accents). Accounts of viewing and/or attempting to finalize accommodations, and experiences of racial discrimination while living in off-campus housing, were also discussed.

I concluded with an analysis of the ways in which several participants questioned, minimized, or even denied the significance of racism. This was sometimes framed in terms of a displacement of racial discrimination (where it was acknowledged) to landlords, while fellow students and even the larger university were often portrayed as being less implicated in this phenomenon. Given the degree to which this small scale study has been able to document accounts of racial discrimination in the off-campus housing sector, the ways in which this racial discrimination is often downplayed by interviewees points to the challenges involved in garnering greater critical attention for and mobilizing more effective challenges to such discrimination.

Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to investigate the question: To what extent and in what ways do students at Brock University experience or observe racial discrimination in the course of seeking out and/or living in off-campus housing in the Niagara Region? The results demonstrate that, contrary to dominant discourses of a colour-blind, post-racial Canada, many participants in this study reported that their racialized identities influenced their housing searches, and that they and/or others that they knew had experienced racial discrimination, both during housing searches and while living in off-campus housing. Forms of discrimination documented here included being asked racist or discriminatory questions during their initial interactions with landlords, potential roommates and landlords not responding to inquiries about accommodations, discrimination based on their names or voices over the phone, being told that rooms had already been rented, and differential or discriminatory treatment while living in off-campus housing. While not an original focus of this study, participants also illuminated a range of other issues, including other forms of discrimination that students face in their off-campus housing experiences. The role of landlords in perpetrating discrimination, whether racial or otherwise, was also highlighted by participants.

While not all of the participants interviewed in this study experienced racial discrimination in off-campus housing, the effects on those who did were significant. Participants described the frustration and emotional stress they endured because of their experiences. As has been mentioned, one participant mentioned moving back in with his parents in a different city and commuting to school in order to avoid having more negative experiences. For some, their experiences of racial discrimination in off-campus housing made them less excited to begin their

studies, or worried that they would not be able to attend university at all because they could not find a place to live.

While the negative effects of discrimination in off-campus housing were clear, there was also some evidence of participants resisting or challenging such discrimination. As mentioned, one enlisted the help of a friend to investigate whether a landlord had been discriminatory. Some participants considered concealing information about themselves in order to secure accommodations. Significantly one participant was in the process of taking her landlord to the Landlord-Tenant Board. While this legal action was not related to any racial discrimination this participant experienced, her actions speak to the possibility of others using this as an avenue to seek justice.

This analysis of racial discrimination in off-campus housing indicates the need to challenge such discrimination and to better support racialized minority students facing a racist housing market. The existing Brock Graduate Students' Association's housing resource and the more comprehensive Brock Off-Campus Living website include information on human rights and housing and tenant rights, and these resources are easily accessible to university students. However, students need to seek out this information, and often are only tempted to do so if and when they experience difficulties or discrimination in housing. In addition, if students do encounter racial discrimination, as this study makes clear, they are often unable or unwilling to challenge this through legal action because of lack of time, monetary resources, or knowledge of the legal system. If racial discrimination in off-campus housing is to be challenged, those experiencing such discrimination need to be empowered.

Other universities in North America have sometimes taken a more proactive role to advance student interests as, for example, at the University of Illinois, where the University of

Illinois Tenant Union keeps records of claims (involving the violation of laws or lease agreements) that have been filed against landlords and property owners, and makes these records available to students looking for housing in the area (Sadayuki, 2015). That offending landlords suffer from such exposure is suggested by the fact that “the rental price of housing provided by property owners with more than 10 claims was 10.1% lower than the rental price paid for housing managed by property owners having fewer claims” (Sadayuki, 2015, p. 90). This suggests that students are making use of these records, and that they choose not to rent from property owners with a high number of claims filed against them. This example indicates the important role that the university can play in the off-campus housing experiences of students, particularly in the initial steps of looking at housing listings.

While Brock University has made efforts to assist students in their off-campus housing searches through online resources, it is possible that they could take a more active role in supporting and advocating for students during this process. For example, the university administration could take further steps to actively educate students about their rights as tenants in the Niagara housing market, and provide them with legal resources so that students can feel empowered to challenge discrimination in off-campus housing more often and more effectively. In addition, the university administration could encourage and engage in more public discussion of the challenges faced by students in off-campus housing, and better advertize their existing online resources so that students can use these resources in a preventative manner, instead of seeking them out after the fact. The university might also increase its role in liaising with cities and towns in the region that house Brock University students, in order to more effectively ensure that students’ human rights are being upheld.

In addition to the university's role, cities and towns within the Niagara Region can also take steps to improve students' off-campus housing experiences. Prioritizing affordable housing will provide more options for students when initially searching for housing in the region, but will also ensure that they have options when attempting to escape discriminatory landlords or other difficult housing situations. In addition, greater regulation of landlords and serious sanctioning of consistently problematic landlords, in the form of financial penalties or being placed on a public list of landlords with complaints levelled against them, would be important steps toward addressing the issue of discrimination in off-campus housing.

That this small scale study revealed multiple instances of racial discrimination in off-campus housing in the Niagara Region points to the need for more attention to be paid to the issue of racial discrimination in off-campus university student housing more broadly. The limited existing scholarship necessitates future research, both in the Niagara Region and across Canada. In the Niagara Region, this research might involve larger scale email-based or audit studies focusing on racial discrimination in off-campus student housing, in order to apply a more quantitative analysis to this issue. It is possible to combine these quantitative methods with qualitative interviews, such as those presented in this study, in order to provide a more complete and representative picture of the realities of racial housing discrimination in the region. The specific challenges of international students in off-campus housing markets is a topic briefly focused on in this study that also requires further attention. In the Niagara Region, as well as in other university towns and cities in Canada, studies exploring the possible differences between individual landlords and those working for private housing companies, and the consequences of these differences for students, would be an important area of research. In addition, there is a need for comparative studies of discrimination in the off-campus housing markets across

different cities and regions in Canada, in order to highlight the importance of geography and local issues on students' housing experiences. Hopefully this study, and future ones like it, will bring increased awareness to the issue of racial discrimination, and lead to education and action by universities, students, and their communities, in order to combat racism and improve students' future off-campus housing experiences.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Poster

Are you interested in discussing discrimination in off-campus housing in the Niagara Region?

Consider participating in the study *Exploring Racial Discrimination in the Context of Off-Campus University Student Housing*

We want to hear from you:

- Current Brock University students with experience of off-campus housing in the Niagara Region willing to discuss the issue of racial discrimination and off-campus housing
- Students willing to share their experiences or observations (personal and/or of friends, family, etc.) of racial discrimination with a graduate student researcher

Participation will involve:

- Involvement in an audio-recorded focus group of 3-5 students, lasting approximately 60 minutes
- Willingness to be contacted for an optional audio-recorded follow-up interview, lasting no more than 60 minutes

Participants will receive a \$20 Tim Horton's gift card for their participation in this study.

This study has received ethics clearance through the Brock University Research Ethics Board (file# 14-325 Helleiner)

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Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Project Title: Exploring Racial Discrimination in the Context of Off-Campus University Student Housing

Principal Investigator (PI): Jane Helleiner
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INVITATION

You are invited to participate in a study that involves research. The purpose of this study, entitled Exploring Racial Discrimination in Off-Campus University Student Housing, is to investigate student experiences with and observations of racial discrimination in off-campus housing in the Niagara Region. This study seeks to, firstly, document stories of racial discrimination that often go unheard, as these stories are of value in and of themselves; secondly, to bring greater awareness to the issue of racial discrimination in off-campus housing, especially to those who do not necessarily realize that it is an issue; and thirdly, to combat and challenge racial discrimination, in order for students' future experiences to be improved.

WHAT'S INVOLVED

As a participant, you will be asked to participate in an audio taped focus group, consisting of three to five student participants, in which observations of or experiences with racial discrimination in off-campus housing as a university student in the Niagara Region will be discussed. The questions to be asked in the focus group are attached to this informed consent form. If the schedules of some potential participants are not conducive to focus group participation, individual interviews will take place in a quiet room on campus, using the questions from the focus group schedule. You will be compensated for your time with a \$20 Tim Horton's gift certificate. In addition, you may be contacted for a follow-up one-on-one interview to elaborate on any experiences or observations of racial discrimination in off-campus housing discussed in the focus group. These interviews will also be audio-taped, and will last no more than one hour in length. Should you participate in a follow-up interview, you will be compensated for your time with an additional \$20 Tim Horton's gift certificate.

You will be given the opportunity to review a copy of your focus group and interview transcripts after they are transcribed, in order to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and add/delete or clarify any points that you wish. Transcripts of each participants' contributions will be sent after they are transcribed, within a month of each focus group/interview. Transcripts will be provided

to participants using the contact information they provide on the informed consent form. Participants will be given one week to look over their transcripts and email their clarifications or comments to the Principal Student Investigator. If comments have not been received after one week, it will be assumed that the participants have no comments or clarifications, and data analysis will proceed with the original transcript.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS

Your participation in this study will aid in the documentation of stories of racial discrimination that often go unheard, as these stories are of value in and of themselves; bring greater awareness to the issue of racial discrimination in off-campus housing, especially to those who do not necessarily realize that it is an issue; and finally, will be part of a project that seeks to combat and challenge racial discrimination, in order for students' future experiences to be improved.

Possible risks include psychological risks, insofar as the topic of racial discrimination is a sensitive one. It is possible that some focus group/interview participants may experience emotional stress through revisiting and/or sharing experiences or observations of racial discrimination. In addition, participants might experience social risks insofar as their personal experiences of racial discrimination may be made known to other participants in the focus group and to the focus group facilitator, leading to loss of privacy, status and/or reputation. There also may be social risks for third parties, as participants may inadvertently name a third party (such as a family member, friend, landlord, roommate, etc.) in the course of focus group or interview discussion.

These risks will be mitigated by participants understanding the sensitive nature of focus group and interview discussion, and exercising their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The Principal Student Investigator will have a list of contact information for a wide range of on-campus support services on hand that will be made available to participants if requested. Participants are reminded to use respectful language at all times, to refrain from mentioning third parties, and to keep all focus group and interview discussions confidential. As previously mentioned, participants will have the opportunity to review their transcripts, in order to make changes or comment on their contributions to the focus group/interview.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information you provide will be kept confidential. Your name will not appear in any publications resulting from this study; however, anonymous quotations linked to self-described racial and gender identity, as well as domestic or international student status, may be used. All information you provide in the focus group setting will be considered confidential. Given the format of this session, we ask you to respect your fellow participants by keeping all information that identifies or could potentially identify a participant and/or his or her comments confidential. There is a potential limit to confidentiality in that the researchers cannot control possible disclosures made by other focus group participants, and the only way this limit can be mitigated is through the discretion of all participants. You will be asked to keep the content of all focus group discussions confidential.

Access to this data will be restricted to Cara Nightingale and her faculty supervisor, Jane Helleiner. The confidentiality of focus group and interview material will be ensured in the

following manner. All audio files will be numerically coded. A hard copy of a master list that contains the link between participant names and the code number for the focus groups and interviews will be separately and securely stored in a locked filing cabinet in the faculty office of the Principal Investigator and will not be shared. The master list will be retained until the thesis is complete and will then be securely destroyed. The Principal Student Investigator will transcribe all audiofiles, which will be stored on her password-protected computer. The transcriptions will be identified by the same numerical code as the audio file and all names or other personal identifiers will be removed from focus group and interview transcripts, with only participants' self-described racial and gender identity, and domestic or international student status remaining. Any references to third parties will also be omitted from all transcripts. If you indicate that you would like to review your contributions, focus group and interview transcripts will be provided to you for approval. In terms of the focus groups, each participant will be sent their own contributions only. Transcripts that are sent for approval online will be encrypted. Once the transcripts have been approved, the audio files will be securely destroyed. Numerically coded hard copies of the transcripts will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet in the faculty office of the Principal Investigator. Digital and hard copies of the transcripts will be kept for 12 months after the Principal Student Investigator's MA thesis is complete, for the purpose of further publications, after which time they will be securely destroyed.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If you choose to withdraw, both digital and hard copies of your contributions to focus groups and or/interviews will be securely destroyed, and will not be used in any stage of research.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

Results of this study will be included in the Principal Student Investigator's MA thesis, which is a public document and will be available to participants on the Brock University online database after the thesis is completed. In addition, the results of this study may be published in professional journals and/or presented at conferences. It is anticipated that feedback about this study will be available no later than December 2016, including a summary of the study. Participants who wish to view the final thesis can contact Cara Nightingale or Jane Helleiner using the contact information presented above.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact Cara Nightingale or Jane Helleiner using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University (file # 14-325 Helleiner). If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in the study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

Please indicate your preference regarding how you would like to be anonymously identified in terms of:

Racial identity: _____

Gender identity: _____

Student status (domestic or international): _____

Would you be willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview?

YES ☐ **NO** ☐

Would you like to review a transcript of your contributions to the focus group and/or follow-up interview?

YES ☐ **NO** ☐

If yes, please indicate an email address or other means through which you would like to receive your transcript:

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C: Participant Identities**Self-Described Identities**

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Racialized Identity</u>	<u>Gender Identity</u>	<u>Student Status</u>
1	White	Female	Domestic
2	Desi (Pakistani)	Male	Domestic
3	Caucasian	Female	Domestic
4	Mixed black/white	Female	Domestic
5	Aboriginal	Female	Domestic
6	White	Female	Domestic
7	Indian	Female	Domestic
8	Pakistani	Male	Domestic
9	Black (Trinidadian)	Female	Domestic
10	Italian	Female	Domestic
11	Guyanese & Vincentian, Caribbean	Female	Domestic
12	Asian	Male	International
13	Nigerian (African)	Female	Domestic
14	White	Male	Domestic

Appendix D: Interview Questions

- 1) I would like to begin by having us both introduce ourselves (starting with myself). Tell me a bit about your background as it relates to this discussion (e.g. What brought you to the study, what aspects of your background and experiences are relevant to this discussion, etc.).
- 2) What are some of your overall impressions of the ease or difficulty of finding off-campus housing in the Niagara Region?
- 3) How might the identities of Brock University students influence their search for and life in off-campus housing in the Niagara Region? More specifically, how might racialized identities be relevant?
- 4) Do you have any stories that you can share of other Brock University students experiencing forms of discrimination while searching for or living in off-campus housing? (E.g., locating housing possibilities, meeting potential landlords or roommates, finalizing a rental or lease agreement, or ongoing relations with other tenants/roommates, neighbours, landlords.) More specifically, do you have stories of racial discrimination?
- 5) If you haven't already shared them, do you have stories of your personal experiences of searching for and living in off-campus housing in the Niagara Region that relate to this discussion? (E.g., locating housing possibilities, meeting potential landlords or roommates, finalizing a rental or lease agreement, or ongoing relations with other tenants/roommates, neighbours, landlords.)
- 6) Do you feel that your racialized identity influenced your housing search in any way? Why or why not?

- 7) Have you searched for and/or lived in off-campus housing in another region or city? If so, how was the experience similar or different than your experience of searching for and/or living in off-campus housing in the Niagara Region?
- 8) Do you have any subsequent experiences with searching for or living in off-campus housing in the Niagara Region that you feel are relevant and would like to discuss?